

Antichrist & Tribulation - Past or Future?

by Shane Idleman

The speaker explores the complex topic of Matthew 24 and eschatology, discussing the Great Tribulation, the Antichrist, and the millennial reign of Christ.

Duration: 49:10

Scripture: Matthew 24:4

Topics: "Eschatology", "Readiness for Christ's Return"

Description

Shane Idleman addresses the complexities of eschatology in his sermon 'Antichrist & Tribulation - Past or Future?', emphasizing the differing interpretations of Matthew 24 regarding the Antichrist and the tribulation. He acknowledges the confusion surrounding these topics and encourages believers to focus on spreading the Gospel rather than engaging in divisive debates. Idleman highlights the importance of being prepared for Christ's return, urging the congregation to live with a sense of urgency and hope amidst the challenges of the world. He concludes by reminding listeners that true readiness comes from a relationship with Christ and a commitment to serve others.

Transcript

If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Matthew 24, and it's an interesting chapter because some people will say this has to do with eschatology, which has to do with the study of the last times. It has to do with future events. Other people say it's already occurred, it was already fulfilled, and that's why there's a division within the body of Christ on what exactly Matthew 24 is pertaining to.

And as I read it, as I read Daniel and different things throughout probably the last 15-16 years, it can get confusing. I'll be the first to admit that. I have not fully grasped this topic.

The topic of Christ is the only way, the only truth, the only life, I got it. But when it comes to eschatology and when things are going to happen, the Antichrist, the rapture, has it already occurred, the catching away, the pre-tribulation, the mid-tribulation, is there a tribulation, millennial reign of Christ, is there a millennial reign of Christ? There's a lot of differing views. And Matthew 24 is complex.

And I was happy to come across a statement from D.A. Carson, who said this, the history and the interpretation of this chapter is immensely complex. So I said, good, I'm in good company. I believe he has a Ph.D. in New Testament studies.

And a lot of these guys are divided. You can have someone like John Piper, who I spoke about last week, and R.C. Sproul, and Sam Storm, and Doug Wilson, and all these people, and they'll sit at a table for an hour and a half, and they'll each give their view. And a lot of them have good points.

So my whole point in saying that is, I don't believe this is an area that we should argue over, and fight, and bicker, and complain. And we spend three hours in a discussion of arguing and complaining when there's lost people dying in the Antelope Valley because they haven't heard of Jesus Christ. And a lot of people that want to debate often ask, when was the last time you spoke to somebody about Jesus Christ and gave the gospel? So be careful.

We don't want this to turn into a big debate when the primary focus is reaching other people, loving other people, and dying to self, and letting God use us. Now that doesn't mean we minimize theology. Theology is important.

To have a correct understanding of theology and God's Word is something that's foundational for West Side Christian Fellowship. Now I want to recap a few things I said last week. Do we take the Bible literally? Do you take the Bible literally? I hope so.

You take the Bible literally when it's to be taken literally. There's no reason not to unless the context and different things speak otherwise. I'm not going to get into a lot of that because I did last week.

And if you didn't hear the message, you can go online and listen to part one. This is part two. Part one was, do you take the Bible literally? And I'm trying to lay a foundation.

So this might not make a lot of sense today if you don't go back and listen to last week's message. So with that said, Matthew 24, when Jesus went out and departed from the temple and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple, and Jesus said to them, Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another that shall not be thrown down. That's pretty clear.

There's the temple. Jesus says that this is going to be destroyed. And most agree that that was fulfilled in A.D. 70 when Titus, who later became an emperor of Rome, destroyed the city of Jerusalem.

Ransacked it, knocked down the walls, destroyed the temple. I believe it was estimated that one million Jews, men, women, and children, were killed in that siege against Jerusalem. It was horrific.

The time of this massive destruction took place. I mean, to see the temple demolished and the wall broken down and the city of Jerusalem utterly destroyed was, back then, catastrophic. So you can see the context here that Jesus is writing.

Now here's where most agree to that, that that was fulfilled. But then verse 3, it goes into a different setting. He's up on the Mount of Olives.

That's why it's called the Olivet Discourse. He's looking down on the city of Jerusalem now with his disciples. And he says, and the disciples came to him privately, tell us, when will these things be? What things? One stone will be left upon another.

And what will be the sign of your coming? And what is the end of the age? So what we do now is we take this as three separate questions. Okay, the first one, when will these things be? What's fulfilled? And what

will be the sign of your coming? Hasn't happened. And what will be the end of the age? Hasn't happened.

So we can look back 2,000 years ago and break it apart. But as I said last week, in my opinion, I believe that the disciples looked at this as one event. When's this going to happen? When are you coming? And when's the end? I don't think we'd have thought 2,000 years from now.

They viewed that as all one event. Now, does that mean that this can't have practical application for us today? Of course not. But reading in context and looking back even to Matthew 16, 17, 18, looking up, Jesus is preparing the disciples.

And they believe the end is near, the Messiah is coming. So I can't picture, at least through my studies, that they're thinking that these questions will be answered thousands of years from the time of Jesus. When are you coming again? When's the end of the age? When is all this going to happen? Because for them to think all of Jerusalem and the temple is going to be utterly destroyed is not the end.

They think that's the end. The Messiah is coming. So that's why, and the reason I'm saying that is that's why there's differing opinions on this topic.

Because if that was all happening at that point in history, then what I'm about to read already took place. So verse 4, And Jesus answered and said to them, Take heed that no one deceives you. This is key.

For many will come in my name, saying, I am the Christ, and will deceive many. And you will hear of rumors of wars, and you will see different things. Verse 6, let me read that again.

And you will hear of rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled. For all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilence, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

Then they will deliver you up to tribulation. They will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. So is Jesus speaking to them? He's calling, he's saying you will be, you will be, you will be, you will be.

He's talking to that group that's right there with him. So as D. A. Carson rightly noted, if this is a future event for us, even still have more future. If it is, then it's the only place in the recorded Gospels where Jesus is doing an audience shift.

So he's not really talking to his contemporaries. When I say you, I don't mean you. I mean thousands of years from now.

So that's a good point, and I will concede to that. He's audience shifting. He's saying, okay disciples, you will see this, but I'm really meaning for thousands of years from now.

However, this could have dual application that many people have attested to, where he's talking about you will go through sorrows. You will see pestilence, and famines, and earthquakes. You will see these things.

And guess what we're seeing? I mean, you can Google earthquake, the charts and different things and the pestilence, and rumors of war, nation rising against nation. So it's those things that make you go, hmm, well that's interesting, isn't it? That sure has application today. So the challenge with studying a topic like

this is you see the context.

You see Jesus is speaking to his disciples, and I'm quite confident that they saw pestilence. They felt earthquakes. They saw these things.

But does it have application for us today? Well, we're seeing many of the same things. And the reason I'm trying to take two views is I haven't gained a position yet where I can say, yep, this is the only way. When you have great men of God divided on this issue who have forgotten more than I'll ever know about theology, who am I going to say, well, no, John Piper, you're wrong, and you're wrong, and you're wrong, and this is right, this is why.

Because I don't have, there's so many good, yeah, but this, but that, but, you know, and you see all these things. You see the poisoning of a one-world government. That is crystal clear.

Nobody can ignore that. For a nation to be reborn in 1948 is a miracle. You see the nations, Magog, surrounding Jerusalem, Turkey, Syria, Russia, you see all of them poised for battle.

You see the setup for a possible one-world government and a one-world exchange of system. So these things, to me, I see them and I go, hmm, interesting, wow, that could take place. I mean, we're not living in where bayonets and bow and arrows.

We're living in an age where a nuclear, we have the nuclear capacity to wipe out millions of people. So we see, we can read this and go, you know what, this could have application for today. We can't ignore that.

To ignore that, I think, is not a good thing because we clearly see the signs of the times. However, does this have context with only what happened here in Matthew 24 in Jesus' time? Well, we will know at some point. Not today, not next week, not next month, but there will come a time, maybe on that side of heaven, where we will know what exactly the layout was.

So the key questions are, what is, well, let me go back to this real quick. In verse 11, then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many, and because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. Something I'm not going to get to today, but it's important, is verse 34. Jesus says, I'm telling you, verily, verily, I say, I'm telling you that this generation will not pass away until everything I just said is fulfilled.

So that also makes you go, well, it has immediate application to the people he's speaking to. Well, no, generation can be a group of people. It can be the nation of Israel.

It could. The word could be used. But if you look at the context with you, you, you, and this generation will not pass away, you will see.

Why would you say that? Why would you say this generation will not pass away until all these things happen if it's thousands of years from now? It will just happen. You don't have to say that. So that's why there's a lot of difficulty in understanding who he's talking to.

But again, if we fast forward to our time, a lot of these things, and we say pestilence, google what a pestilence is. Pestilence. It can be disease even.

You see, there's different things that we see are rising up. And people say, well, that's always been out throughout all of history. True, it has.

But to see all of these things lining up, it makes you want to hold your eschatology somewhat lightly. Right? We hold on theology, the essential. Sorry, can't bend on this.

But when it comes to eschatology, you can say, that's an interesting concept. We will know at some point. And as I've said before, if you see a one world leader coming to power, you see a one monetary system, you see a lot of these things, then it's going to give credit to what is called a premillennial, pre-tribulation view.

If you don't see these things and the world's becoming more Christianized and we're not seeing a one world government and different things. There's also views on America in the end times. Will America be around? Well, there's people such as Waleed Shobab, an ex-terrorist.

You can google his videos who thinks that America is still around and is very strong. And they're going to be part of the alliance that defeats those coming against Israel. Interesting concepts.

Very interesting. I mean, I personally like that one. You know? Versus, oh, America.

You know, when people are like, America will be destroyed. And I'm worried about the spiritual condition of our nation. But I'm also thankful that we have tens of thousands of praying believers, who knows, a million, two million, praying believers, fasting and contending.

And as Abraham asked God, will you destroy the nation over 50? No. How about 35? How about 20? No. So we see that God's wrath sometimes is withheld when those who are standing and interceding for the land.

I sought for a man from among them who would build a wall and stand in the gap before my people so that I might not destroy the land, but I found no one. So there's a lot of encouraging text in that area. So just hold your views lightly if you can, with palms open.

So let's talk about briefly the Great Tribulation and the Antichrist. What is the Great Tribulation? Well, the Great Tribulation, again to some, already occurred in AD 70, when Jerusalem was taken over and a million people were slain. All the blood was running down the steps and different things.

But personally, when I read Revelation, I have a hard time jumping to that and saying that all this already happened. Again, personally, it's hard for me to say, you know, one-third of the sea, one-third of this, one-third of this, one-third of the population, you know, two-thirds of the population, and a million people were killed in Jerusalem in AD 70. That's horrific.

Any idea how many were killed under Hitler? Just Jews? Six million. So you start to, you know, try to look at the whole picture. And I do believe, I won't say this arrogantly, I'll just say it, that I think as time progresses, those who live later on and can look at a bigger, broader scope of church history, can look at eschatology and arrive to certain opinions based on where they see things now.

You would have said the nation of Israel would have become a nation again back in Martin Luther's day, or John Calvin, or Ulrich Zwingli in Switzerland, or John Knox in Scotland, the Reformers. You would have, that would have not even happened. So a lot of this theology comes out of the Reformation movement.

The Reformers held on to this theology. That's why you'll see people like R.C. Sproul and different people who are in the Reformed faith. One exception is John MacArthur.

He'd be Reformed, but he's a dispensationalist. He's a futurist, thinking that these things are in the future. So you see a division even there.

But the Reformers taught these things. Even D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, who I love as far as commentaries, would be somebody who would be called an amillennial. That there is no coming millennial reign of Christ.

That's all allegory, or figuratively speaking. And Satan will not be bound, let alone an actual chain. He will not be bound.

It's a fight. It's a struggle between the church age and the world, and things like that. So there's, if we had four hours, I could maybe scratch the surface.

And that's why we have to go over different topics over the next few weeks. But again, the Great Tribulation has already been occurred to some who believe it happened in 1870. Point of clarification, the Tribulation period, if you believe it's still coming.

It's a seven-year period. You have to understand that it's not, that whole thing is not tribulation. It is.

But the first half is tribulation because of the Antichrist. The last half is the tribulation because Almighty God pours out His fury and judgment on an unbelieving, Christ-rejecting world. So it's actually two separate tribulations.

One is the tribulation that comes to the saints, to those who believe in God, who are not going to take the mark, who are not going to denounce Christ. And there's a tribulation for them. But then you see God pouring out His wrath.

Jesus says, the Great Tribulation. So there's different tribulations in that tribulation period. The tribulation, again, to the group that believes it's coming, is a future time period when the Lord will accomplish at least two aspects of His plan.

Number one, He will complete His discipline of the nation of Israel, according to Daniel 9.24. Now, on this, the view that's normally held with Reformation theology is the Church has replaced Israel. So they wouldn't agree with this either. The Church of Jesus Christ has replaced Israel.

It's also called Covenant theology, which means the Church has replaced Israel. The reason it's called Covenant theology is God made covenants with people. We can see the Adamic covenant with Adam, the Noahic covenant with Noah, the covenant with Abraham, the Davidic covenant with David.

You see God is a covenant-keeping God. And when He said, Israel, if you do these things, if you continue, if you walk in my way, if you do these, you will have these promises. Now, did Israel do that? No.

Just read the Old Testament. It was not good. They rejected God.

So God, Covenant theology, God, the covenant was based on if. In other words, we like to read those covenants too in the Scriptures. If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will heal their land.

If we don't humble ourselves, pray, seek His face and turn from sin, God's not going to do that. And we can see that in our own individual lives. So many people are praying, God, if you would do this, if you would heal my marriage, if you would heal this, take this away.

But I'm not going to humble myself. I sure don't have time to pray. I'm not going to seek you with all my heart.

I'm not going to turn from my wicked way because I enjoy it. But throughout all of the New Testament, we can see if, if you do these things, God will bless us. You say, no Shane, that's all works.

No, it's not. That's not works. That's somebody submitting to the work of God.

If my people do these things. So that's why a lot of people don't believe that there is a plan for Israel because the church has replaced Israel. Now there's a lot of promises that where you could see that could take place.

But if you just read Romans 9, 10 and 11, chapters 9, 10, 11, in my opinion, and one of those, I believe it's chapter 11, Paul says has God, has God, you know, given up on his people? Certainly not. So you read chapters 9, 10, 11, you're like, I don't know if that quite works. You know, I can see where two separate plans would fall into place.

His plan for Israel, his plan for the church. I can see that, but I can also see that Israel through covenant theology did not keep their covenant. But also regarding covenant theology, they might have not received the blessings of God, but his eternal purposes and decrees will prevail regardless of what Israel did.

So if God made promises to David and promises that, and the reason a lot of people believe in the millennial reign of Christ is because then that's when those promises will be fulfilled. But then one problem I have with the millennium is their, the sacrificial system is brought back in again. And people say, well, that's just for a memorial.

Well, it's not a very good memorial to sacrifice animals. And they'll say, well, that never really covered sin. They needed Christ.

Right. But it was a temporary covering waiting for the fulfillment of the true Passover lamb. So the reason the whole point is shedding of blood in the Old Testament was to cover temporary covering of those sins until the Messiah came.

So now that the Messiah comes, why would you bring back the sacrificial system? There'll be sacrificing at the temple. And I don't have an answer for that. It doesn't make sense.

And you can say it's for a memorial, but why would you do that? Why would you slaughter animals as a memorial? Well, we have a memorial of the Lord's Supper. Okay, that's a quantum leap. You know, let's be careful there.

So that's what the tribulation is to some people. It's a future time when the Lord will accomplish at least two aspects of his plan. He will complete his discipline of Israel.

He will judge the unbelieving, godless inhabitants of the earth. The length of the tribulation is seven years. This is determined by an understanding of the 70 weeks of Daniel.

And if you want to turn to Daniel 9, maybe we'll get to that. Then we can spend another couple hours. But that's what the tribulation is.

In a nutshell, what a lot of people teach is the rapture of the church. And people say, well, the rapture is not even mentioned in the Bible. Well, the word Bible is not in the Bible.

The word Old Testament is not in the Bible. The word New Testament is not in the Bible. So rapture, the word rapture comes from Thessalonians when Paul was talking to the church in Thessalonica, he said, don't worry, there'll be a catching away.

When Christ comes, there'll be a catching away, a catching up to meet him in the sky. And then when Jerome translated the Latin Vulgate, the Bible to Latin, he used the word rapturus, I believe it is, in Latin where it's where we get our word rapture. So rapture, rapturus, catching away, caught up, it's all the same thing.

And there will be a catching up. There will be a catching up somehow. Now when it is, people think, or when it all occurred, there's again debates on that.

But I want to clarify that they would believe that the rapture is coming soon, we'll be out of here as soon as it gets difficult, we're out of here. Well, again, tell people in Syria that, or Iran, or the 250 believe the young girls that ISIS is going to kill because they don't want to become sex slaves. Tell them it's not really that bad yet.

The bad stuff's coming later. It doesn't get any worse than that. So I think we just have to be careful.

So one view is there's a rapture coming, we're raptured up, the Antichrist is revealed, we won't see that, they say, and that's what I tell those people. So if you see a one world government and a one world system, you might change your view, that might change my view. Okay, we'll see, we're going through and we're watching these things.

The Antichrist will rule and reign, he'll make a covenant with the nation of Israel, he'll break that covenant and put up this thing in the temple to where the people are worshiping him, and then God's wrath is poured out on this world is one view. The other view is a lot of those things that Jesus talked about already happened. And the world is getting difficult, there is tribulation, but it's not what we read in Matthew 24.

Oh, I found it here, Romans 9 through 11. Romans 11, I say then, has God cast away his people? Certainly not, for I also am an Israelite of the seed of Abraham of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away his people whom he foreknew.

So throughout 9, 10, and 11, he's talking about God's plan for Israel. So when you read the scriptures, that's why there's two views. You can see the covenant theology's view, that Israel broke their covenant with God, God doesn't need to honor it, the church comes in and fulfills those promises.

Or you see the view that there's two, there's Israel and the church, God has a distinct and separate plan. Well, what about the Gentiles being grafted in? Yeah, they're grafted in, doesn't mean the vines pulled out from the roots, they're grafted into this plan that God has. So each one of those topics could take an hour, hour and a half sermon.

And that's why, you know, we just have to throw out nuggets and try to work our way through this. And many people right now are going, yeah, but what about this, what about this? Well, welcome to my world the last two weeks. But if you have genuine questions, ask one of the ushers on your way out.

I'm kidding, I'm kidding. Because all these views, I mean, somebody sent me a Chuck Missler video, four and a half hours long, so I watched half of that. John Piper, you know, all these guys sitting around the table, read that, I read articles, I've been reading lots of articles.

You read the Word, you read the Word. And it's just, I think it's for a reason that we don't have a full grasp on what's coming. Because the thing that's always highlighted is, are you ready? Are you ready for my return? Be ready, be alert, be vigilant.

And then, how do we know? Well, after 24, have you ever heard the parable of the ten virgins? Five weren't prepared, five were. And that's all context. Are you ready for my return? And Jesus is speaking.

The interesting thing about the Word of God, it's living, it's powerful, sharper than any double-edged sword. So when people say, well, that's not relevant today, I want to say, yeah, yes it is. It's as relevant today as it was 2,000 years ago.

And it's living, so it's speaking to people 2,000 years ago to give them comfort, to give them direction, to have them prepare. It spoke to Martin Luther in 1517 when he nailed the 95 Thesis to the church doors in Wittenberg, Germany, and the Reformation was sparked. And William Tyndall, John Huston, it kept showing people.

And that's why you have to hold these types of views rather loosely, because there's lots of different dynamics that are taking place. Zechariah 4.12, I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem. They say, this has not occurred.

The battle will be at the end of the Tribulation, also referred to as the Battle of Armageddon. Now this is interesting. Temple sacrifices could be resumed by the Jews.

If you go online, you look at the Temple Institute, it has prepared all the priestly garments and sacred vessels for the rebuilt temple, which can be viewed on their website. It even trains members of the priestly family to be ready to serve as soon as the temple is constructed. So either that's an outright lie and that's all wrong and Snopes will even pick it up.

Snopes or whatever that's called that identifies fake stories with real stories. Or you see them doing this, getting ready, preparing. You see the future that is taking shape with the One World Government, all these things, and you can form your own opinion of what is happening here.

Okay, that's the Tribulation in a nutshell. What is or who is the Antichrist? Well, a couple things we need to remember. The word is not used in Revelation.

The word Antichrist is not used in Revelation. The Antichrist spirit was at work in the first century. In John 2.18, John said that he was, that John was in the last hour.

So John thought he was in the last hour, not two thousand years from now. So they're living with this immediate return of Christ. Because the anti-spirit via false prophets had already come into the church.

And that's why he said, do not be deceived. Many false prophets will come up and rise up. And this is one of those things again that make you go, hmm, do we see a lot of false prophets today? Let me answer it for you.

Yes, with a big exclamation point. And believe it or not, a false prophet is not what many people think. You'll hear a lot of different answers out there.

They're not dressed in red carrying a pitchfork. Misleading. They're actually smooth talkers.

Intentionally deceiving. Telling people what they want to hear. So in a nutshell, a false prophet tells you what you need to hear, I mean, sorry, tells you what you want to hear and not what you need to hear.

That's the difference. A false teacher will tell you what you want to hear, not what you need to hear. Now not everybody that tells you what you want to hear, like a lot of those people on TV, you know, I wouldn't call them false prophets necessarily.

Some I would, some I wouldn't. But a lot of them just need a mighty baptism of the Spirit to be filled with power and unction and boldness. And they don't spend time with God.

They're just motivational speakers. And so they're telling people what they want to hear, but I don't quickly label them a false prophet because I don't think they're intentionally deceiving anybody. I just think they're good old boys that know it, know it even better.

They just want to be everybody's friend. And that's not biblical necessarily, because when you spend time in God's Word, He wants you to speak with boldness what the truth is. So false prophet, we're going to see, we see those today, they are intentionally deceiving people.

They're telling them what they want to hear. Perfect example, look out through Jeremiah. In Jeremiah's ministry, God, He told Jeremiah that, I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran.

I did not speak to them, yet they spoke. But had they truly stood in My counsel and told the people what they need to hear, it could have turned the entire nation back to God. But these false teachers would come up saying, peace, peace, peace, safety, there's nothing wrong.

It would be like running into a marriage counseling meeting, and you see that there's tons of issues here. Oh my Lord, there's tons of things they need, repentance and this. And you say, hey guys, don't worry about anything.

Just trust in God. Just keep doing what you're doing. He'll see you through.

Man, can I buy you lunch? You're good. You guys are beating yourself up. It's like, yeah, okay.

And they leave and nothing changes. They come back, nothing changes. Peace, peace, safety, the building's on fire.

And we say, guys, don't worry, don't worry, it's a smoke screen. Nothing's happening. Peace, peace, just sit here, let's get through the service.

It's okay. When they should be sounding the alarm. And that's the difference.

A false prophet doesn't want to sound the alarm. They're building up their own ministry, and they're telling people what they want to hear. They're tickling the ears.

That's where that saying comes from. They're tickling the ears. Paul said there will come a time when they will not endure sound doctrine.

That men will be led astray by teachers telling them what they want to hear. Because tickling the ears is like, oh, I like that. Tell me some more.

Tell me some more. Not tickling the ears is this. Get me out of here.

And that happens always in a church, especially this size. There's some people saying, hurry up and get through this sermon. I do not like what you're saying.

I'm convicted. And conviction's a good thing. That's the mark, often, of somebody truly reading from the Word of God, is there's conviction.

But also God's Word builds up. And that's why we're so encouraged sometimes when we get emails from even unbelievers that attend the service. And they say, I don't know what it is, but I want to keep coming back.

I'm convicted, but I want to keep coming back. So that tells me there's something working or the single mom who's barely getting by. She doesn't feel beat up.

She feels encouraged. Well, how can that guy back there feel convicted and doesn't want to come again? And that girl that's 23, her husband just left, single mom, can't get enough of church. So see, it might not be the messenger or the food.

It might be the condition of the heart that we don't want to hear it. And that's why we don't want to change often. Because conviction is one thing.

Change is something quite different. A lot of people are convicted and they don't change. The whole point of conviction is to change.

You can't have one without the other. So let's talk about this Antichrist for a minute. Daniel 11:37 says that he will show no regard for the God of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any God, but will exalt himself.

Now again, right there, this could be a whole sermon, but I'm going to just pull out a few things. Many people say, there's a thought line out there, a line of thought that the Antichrist will be a homosexual. Because the desire by women, or there's no desire for women, or he will not honor the desire of women.

There's many different ways to translate this, but if you look at this whole verse in the context, it's about exalting himself. He will show no regard for the God of his fathers or for the one that desired by women, which could mean the God longed for by women, nor will he regard any God, but will exalt himself. So I don't necessarily pull out that fact, it's interesting, it may happen in these days and times.

But this whole context, somebody from a mid-eastern view would say that the Antichrist is going to be of Muslim descent, because of rejecting the God of their fathers. Who was the God of the Arab nation, the Jews? Abraham. And he's rejecting the God of their fathers.

Do they have a high regard for women? No. Do they like to behead? Yes. Because this one world government, or one world church, if it's coming, is going to probably have to be by force.

And that's why many of me, people have argued, and I know I've upset people, but it's been argued and it comes up here that a lot of people thought Babylon, the mystery of Babylon and the Antichrist will be part of the Roman Catholic Church. The problem with that is that's a religion where people, you're not forced upon it. This almost has to be a forced religion on the people.

They're going to force it. Why? What happens? Beheadings, if you don't follow what they have to say. So what's my opinion? Well, time will tell.

A lot of interesting concepts there. Well, Shane, what do you think? Well, I think he'll show no regard for God of his fathers. I think he will exalt himself if that person is still to come.

Therefore, and I'm going back to Matthew 24, verse 15. Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place, whoever reads, let him understand, then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. In other words, get out of Jerusalem.

Get out of Dodge, because all hell is going to break loose. When you see an abomination of desolation standing in the temple of God. So again, was this fulfilled already? Or is it still to come? Because Jesus is saying, when you see the abomination of desolation.

Verse 17, let him who is on the housetop not go down or take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days.

And pray that your flight may not be in the winter or in the Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation. Such has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, nor ever shall be.

That right there would lead a lot of people to believe it didn't already happen. Because six million people under Hitler is, not that we measure it by people, but it's just as horrific as one million under Titus. And we see these things happening.

And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved. But for the elect's sake, those days will be shortened. So the phrase, well you know what, let's turn to what Jesus is reading.

Daniel 9, or what he's referring to. Daniel 9 verse 24. Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city.

To finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for the iniquity. As you're reading this you can see that this could be Jesus Christ. Many times they say, no this is about the Antichrist.

Well it could be about Jesus Christ. There's your other division. People read that this is about the Antichrist.

Others read that this is about Jesus. So you can see why there's a lot of division here. Right? So, seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city.

To finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for the iniquity. This is what Christ did. To bring in everlasting righteousness, that's what he did.

To seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until the Messiah, the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. The streets shall be built again and the wall even in troublous times.

So, a lot of people would say, when was the call to go out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem? You can go back. You can read Ezra, Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah. They got the call to go and rebuild the city of Jerusalem.

And it was difficult. People like Sanballat and Tobias did not want it to happen. They fought against this all the way.

And you see the city there being rebuilt. The temple being rebuilt. And it's interesting to read Ezra and Nehemiah.

Read those. You can see how this all comes together. And after the sixty-two weeks, Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself.

So, who was Messiah cut off for? Killed. For us. But not for himself.

And the people of the Prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end shall be with the flood. Until the end of the war, desolations are determined.

Then he will confirm a covenant with many for one week. So, that's where we get the one week, the seven year period that some people believe in the tribulation. But in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.

Now, the reason many would say this is Jesus Christ is what did he do? This is exactly what he did. This is exactly what he did. He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.

But, they say the Antichrist will do this. Obviously, the children of Israel, Jerusalem need to reestablish this through the temple that's supposedly being built. And they need to bring sacrifices again.

So, if they do, then people would say, okay, now this is going to fit. He will confirm a covenant with many for one week. But in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.

And on the wing of abomination shall be the one who makes desolate. Even until the consummation which is determined is poured out on the desolate. Wow.

That's a lot. Now, what's interesting, and I would have to agree with, again this camp, talking about Messiah, talking about Jesus, it was fulfilled in 80, 70 different things. It's hard for me to read this, the 490 years, there's a span of three distinct phases, right? A week of seven, one of 62 weeks, and one of one week.

It's hard for me to put in there a big gap. In other words, he's writing as if it all flows. Because the first thing he's talking about here, the first week, seven weeks, has been fulfilled, 62 weeks with the Lord coming and different things.

But now we're in that middle time period yet. We're not even to the final week yet. So we're still caught in that middle week, the last 2,000 years.

So that doesn't, to me, this all flows. This span of 70 weeks are determined for your people, it flows together. It's hard to say, okay, this applied 2,000 years ago, now we're still in the middle of that big chunk and then the one week that is to come is still a ways away.

It's hard for me to make those leaps and come to those conclusions. So this would support the belief that all of this was fulfilled in AD 70. Because you have the 490 year period, you have the different things.

The temple was destroyed, they put an end to offering, sacrifice, and that's what the Antichrist is usually tied to, Daniel 9. Let me read also 2 Thessalonians 2, 3-4. Let no one deceive you by any means, for that day will come up, and he's saying this again, let no one deceive you, talking to the church in Thessalonica, for that day, what day? This day of judgment will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. So many people say, well the falling away hasn't come yet.

Well it's interesting, that falling away could be a political revolt. It could be that back when Israel revolted against, again I'm talking from this side, I'm trying to talk on both sides, this side says that this could be the falling away is the revolt that happened under that, when Titus came in, the nation of Israel revolted against Rome, and that's why this has already been fulfilled. But we also see that a falling away could come very near.

We see the church falling away from what? What's a great falling away going to be from, if it is in the future? This is what the great, they will fall away from truth, if it's coming. If you read this passage, that the falling away comes first, the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition. And what happens a lot of times, again back on this side, is in Revelation 17, 9-10, it reads like this, here is the mind which has wisdom.

The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, and there are seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he comes he must remain a little while. So this group would say that that is Nero, that that ruler is Nero, that John was speaking about.

But one problem with this is, where do we begin? Do we begin with Caesar Augustus, or do we begin with Julius Caesar? When you're starting to line up the five and the six and the final king there. Also, when you do the lineage of the kings, there's kings in there such as Otho and Galba, I believe it's G-A-L-B-A, that they had very short reigns, but they're not included in that six or seven lineup there. So in a nutshell, all of these views have questionable things to them.

It's hard to fully grasp where in the world we're falling. So my encouragement is, if I had another three hours I could expand even more, but personally I would hate to tell my kids not to worry about the coming tribulation, you'll be out of here, and then die and they begin to see signs of the Antichrist and the one world government. Not only will they start to doubt me and my teachings, but they also could doubt the Bible itself.

So I'm just, personally again, I'm careful to show people both sides of what to look for. If you see an Antichrist, if you see a one world government, people might say, nope, that's not coming Shane, that's not happening. Okay, good, I hope not.

Right? I mean if we're going to go through what the Bible talks about, that's already been done, but we have to be prepared, because we don't know the day or the hour, we don't know what things are going to unfold. So I want to just give you a bunch of information, and then you decipher it. You kind of look at everything, and the bottom line is it really shouldn't change anything.

One problem with the rapture view is a lot of people are like, hey, I'm out of here pretty soon, doesn't matter, let's get going, Jesus will be here next week, and you don't really do business until he returns. We're not called to just sit and wait, we're called to be very busy in the kingdom of God, and not let these things distract us. Let me just close with John 3, you might say, what does that have to do with anything? Well, I'll tell you in a minute.

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher, come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him. And I thought, it's so interesting today, so many people, I talked to a Jewish man the other day, 79 years old, he was 7 years old when he was in a concentration camp.

He saw most of his family brutally murdered, and hated God, hated God with a passion. But a series of events, he realized that there is a God. But Jesus Christ? No, he can't go there with him.

So what's going to be the end of that man? 79. Because he clearly, there's a God chain. I know there's a God.

And people can look around at the end times. Yeah, I can see how it's one world. I can see the Bible's right in these areas.

I can see how the times, I can see all these things. And that's what Nicodemus said. He said, clearly, you are, you're doing all, you sent from God, you've done all these miracles.

Did Jesus leave it there? He said, no, Nicodemus, unless you be born again, you will not see the kingdom of God. And my concern is that so many people, as the world gets more difficult, it's not getting easier to live. It's getting more difficult.

That people need to look to the true source of life. The true source. They can't just say, well, I think, or this.

You have to know, am I ready? We could just title the message that. Are you ready? Are you ready for his coming? Are you ready for his return? Because if you don't live for him today, you will not die for him tomorrow. Many people think, oh, just, you know, as things progress.

No, what you do now builds a foundation for who you are later. I wouldn't, that's why I preach on full surrender and preach on being filled with the Spirit and being in God's Word and being humble. Because that's the only foundation that's going to secure us.

And I just read an alarming statistic that suicide is climbing and climbing and climbing 43,000 in 2014. And the sharpest rate increase is with girls 10 to 14. Can you imagine your 10-year-old or someone you're 11, 12, 13, 14, taking their life? Why? Read why.

Depression, anxiety, fear. There's no hope. There's no hope.

And another concern with end times is we like to scare people. But this isn't the time to scare people. This is the time to give them hope.

And you build them up. And people are scared about this. Yeah, it's scary stuff.

But not if you know the author. Not if you know. Because the more filled with the Spirit you are, you can be like Stephen, being stoned to death, saying, God, hold it not against them.

I don't know if I could do that. I'd be checking the rocks back. You know, but that's the grace of God that comes over a person.

So I want to encourage you, young adults are dying. They're wanting to commit suicide. I just prayed for one last week.

God, can you imagine? People, they need hope. They need men and women in this church filled with the Spirit of God, being ready for Christ's return. So that's the closing point.

Are you ready? Most people say, yep, I'm ready for heaven. Okay, well, you've got to bring heaven to earth. You've got to start getting feet to the gospel.

You've got to start opening up your heart, being the arms and the hands of Christ. Visit these hospital homes. Go to people in need.

We're not supposed to come and just get fat on the Word of God and go home and plop up our feet on TV and watch ESPN. And what they did with Curt Schilling, I would encourage you to rethink, you know, watching ESPN, or shopping at Target, right? It's the world is just getting chaotic. It's crazy.

So you've got to go back to the only hope, the only anchor. So all of this, well, Shane, here's what he says, be sober, be alert, be vigilant, be ready. Those are different translations of what Jesus says.

Sober, sober minded. We don't have to go there. We know what that means.

Be alert, be ready. It's like when I go walking in the desert, I'm alert that there might be a two-foot rattlesnake real close. It's, you don't walk through the desert like that.

You're alert, you're ready. And that's how he says we should live our lives. So that's how you're alert with holiness, with a lifestyle that's repentant and clean before God.

You're loving others. You're in His Word. You're ready for His return.

And I want to encourage you to make that commitment again this morning. I don't know where you're at. I don't know if you've drifted.

I don't know if you're on fire for God. It doesn't matter. This is a time for heart examination during worship that we look and we say, God, I'm not ready in this area and I want to be ready for your return.

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