

# Concerning The Coming

Pastor James Richards

22 June 2025

Now, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together with him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed either by a spirit or a spoken word or a letter seeming to be from us to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way, for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first. Some versions, the apostasy. Unless the rebellion comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the Son of Destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so called God or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Do you not remember that I was still with you?

I told you these things? And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.

The coming of the lawless son is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing because they refuse to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion so that they may believe what is false in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness like. Let us pray.

And Father, we realize that we live in dangerous times. We look at the news and we see conflicts around the globe and we don't know when, but we know that these are

[ShepherdsStream.com](http://ShepherdsStream.com)

leading to the coming again of our Savior, Jesus Christ. And this passage says we're not to be alarmed when we see these things. And thank you, Father, that you've told us ahead of time what's going to happen and that you win, Jesus wins, and that we can be comforted in that as we look at this passage. Lord, I pray that you'd just open our minds and our hearts to what you're trying to tell us, that it would help prepare us for that day.

Then we do lift up Marie and God, just help her in her time of grief. And she loved her daughter and really prayed for her salvation. And I know this has got to be hard on her. Comfort her. And again we lift up those that could be in harm's way over in the Middle east, and we pray for your protection over them.

Father, and that they would be kept safe. Pray now that you'd guide and direct us. In Christ's name. Amen. You may be seated.

Well, if you've watched the news at all, you've obviously seen this battle between Iran, Israel and now the United States. And the United states yesterday dropped six of those bunker busting bombs, £30,000 each. They would penetrate 200ft into the ground before they would explode. And the goal was to destroy Iran's nuclear capability. They had buried their nuclear resources 300ft under the ground, sometimes in solid rock.

And for many that leads to great fear. Could it lead to World War Three? Do you understand? If Iran had had a nuclear weapon and they had sent that ballistic missile over to Israel and set it off, you know what would happen? Israel obviously be very damaged.

You know how many nuclear weapons Israel has? Nobody knows for sure, but they estimate they have 40 of them. And they would respond to an attack like that, wouldn't they? And experts say that if there was a small nuclear war in the next year, half of the world's population would die.

Half. That's a serious thing and we should be concerned about what's going on. But Jesus told us back in Matthew 24, he says, you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. And that's been going on since he left, hasn't it? You will hear of wars and rumors of

wars and it'll go on until he comes again.

But he says, for this must take place, it's going to happen. Mankind has sinned and they don't have everyone's best interest in mind. And we have an enemy, Satan, who wants to destroy us and those who follow Christ. But Jesus says, but the end is not yet. The end is not yet.

And so the main purpose of prophecies concerning the end days is so that you will not be alarmed or easily shaken.

Why not?

Because God tells us how it ends, okay? And we know in advance that yes, this will happen. But we know that Christ is coming again and he'll make everything right. And so again, the main purpose of prophecy concerning the future is not to be easily alarmed or shaken by the events that are around us. Concerning the wars and rumors of wars, Jesus said the end is not yet.

Is there anyone here that doesn't have at least some kind of interest in the end in the last days? And there may be. I would suggest that you should. The disciples, did you remember when Jesus said that the temple would be destroyed? The disciples asked, tell us, when will these things be?

And what is the sign of your coming and of the end of the age. And he gave an extensive teaching in Matthew 24 concerning those things. And so we may question, well, why do we need to know what's all this interest in prophecy? Well, it's because the Bible says so. Okay.

Some have estimated that a third of the Bible deals with prophecy, much of it concerning the end times. And so it's written about here. I read this passage in Second Thessalonians. It's one of many that reveal what's going to happen in the last days. We probably get more information about the Antichrist in this chapter than we do even in the Book of Revelation.

So it's important to study. And so as we do that, though I'm aware and you're probably aware, there's a lot of disagreement about this, a lot of disagreement. And I know that's true. I know that even in this room there is much disagreement about the end of time, the end days, and we could go into all of that, but I would rather focus on what we agree about. Okay?

And I don't know what your opinion is, but I guarantee you there are some things that we agree on. First of all, I believe that all of us believe that Jesus is coming again. Can you say Amen to that? He said, the angel said, as they watched Jesus go into the sky, they said, men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.

Jesus is coming again. We can agree on that, okay? Another thing we can agree on, in First Thessalonians 5, 9, we're told, for God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. And I think most of us will agree that God is not going to pour out his wrath on his children, okay? And it doesn't mean there won't be tribulation.

Jesus promised tribulation, okay? But you will not, if you're a believer, will not experience the wrath of God. And another thing is, we believe that when Jesus comes again, we will be with him forever. We'll be in heaven. We'll be enjoying the blessings that God has prepared for us that are beyond even comprehension.

He can't even describe them because we wouldn't be able to do it. That's why Jesus told the disciples in John 14, let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms.

If it were not so, would I have told you that I go there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself. That where I am, you also may be. That's what the Christian looks forward to, is spending eternity with Christ in God. And we could mention a lot of other things we could agree on, and we don't have time to do that.

So having said all of that, what's the problem?

What's the disagreement? What is it that we struggle with as far as thinking about the last days and coming to a conclusion? Any ideas on that?

Sandra knows when and how. When is he coming? A lot of different opinions on that. Some believe that he's coming back at the start of the tribulation, the Rapture. Some believe that he's coming back in the middle at the end.

We can get all of these different opinions, but that's the main disagreement is when, not if, or even so much how. And knowing that if we have a different opinion on that, it shouldn't divide us. Okay? There are wonderful Christians on both sides of these issues, or however many issues are, that love the Lord and they are looking for the return of Christ. The same time, though, we want to know what does the Bible say?

And that's what's important. Because most of us, our thoughts on the end times are not necessarily based on what the Bible says. It's based on what someone taught us.

As much as possible, we want to know what does the Bible say about this? And so they are easily unsettled and alarmed in Thessalonica. And so let's take a look at what is it that has unsettled them. Go to 2 Thessalonians 2, 1, and we see the topic here. Paul says now, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, what's the topic?

The coming of Christ. Which coming?

There's only one coming in the Bible. But the coming that he's referring to is what he had written them back in. First Thessalonians, chapter four. The coming that we refer to as the Rapture. The word Rapture is not in the Bible.

And the thing that happens when Christ, it says, we'll be caught up into the sky with him. First, those who have fallen asleep in the Lord. Second, we who are still alive, caught up. The word for that, the Greek word for that was translated into Latin as raptura, a raptor. And they suddenly grab something and snatch it and take it.

And that's where we get the term the Rapture from. And no problem at all with calling it the Rapture will be caught up into the air. So what are they worried about there? In Thessalonian it says in verse two, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed either by a spirit or a spoken word or a letter seeming to be from us to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. What are they worried about?

If you read that popular series of books, you should know. They're worried they got left behind, that somehow here we are, we're suffering for Jesus Christ. We're looking forward to that day when he comes back. And now we get a letter or some kind of teaching, nobody knows exactly what it was, and basically said, too bad you missed it.

They were alarmed. They were living for that. And so Paul is writing to straighten them out concerning the end times. He says, you should have known this. I taught this, but I'm going to remind you.

And so that teaching had come and they were alarmed and unsettled, saying, the day of the Lord has already come. Now, again, we don't know who brought this teaching, but somehow it had impacted them and they were worried.

But that's the opposite of what God's prophecy is supposed to do. It's not to get you alarmed, it's to comfort you. It's to prepare you concerning the future. So whatever that teaching was, Paul says, don't let anyone deceive you. So what's he dealing with here?

Deception. Deception.

Don't let anyone deceive you in any way. And so Paul's warning about deception should alert us to one of Satan's goals. In the end times.

Satan wants to deceive you and I so that we will be alarmed. Things aren't working out the way I thought they would. What's going on here? Did I get left behind? And I believe that's one of his goals.

And it's one of the reasons that God has given us so much concerning the last days, so that we would not fall the temptation. So to. To counter this false teaching. Paul reminds him of what he taught earlier. He says, that day will not come until, as we look at this, we have to ask, well, what day?

What day is he talking about? And sometimes people want to differentiate. Well, there's the day of Christ, there's the day of the Lord, there's just that day. And are they talking about different things at the start of the tribulation, the end of the tribulation, what are they talking about? And sometimes they'll make an issue out of that.

But the problem is the day of Christ. The day of the Lord and that day are often used interchangeably. And I think it's one day. And I'm going to argue for there's one coming, but we need to be aware that there are differences of opinion on that. But to me it's obvious in this passage that he's talking about the Rapture.

And he said again in chapter two, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and are being gathered together to him. And that's an obvious reference to what he had just written in 1st Thessalonians 4 concerning the rapture. That's what they are concerned about. That's what he is dealing with here. And so I think it's important that we look at the until that day will not happen.

Until. Until what? We need to look into that and see what it is. And so he explains what that is in verse three through five. He says, let no one deceive you in any way, for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first.

And again some translations, the apostasy and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the Son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so called God or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Don't you remember I told you about these things? And so he is saying that that day, whatever it is, the day of the Lord, the day of Christ, the day the Rapture, it can't happen until two things happen. The first is the apostasy. If you read Matthew 24, Jesus warns the disciples that there's going to be great deception and many will fall

away in the last days, and if possible, even the elect, because Satan comes with miracles and signs and he deceives those who don't know Christ.

And so it's saying there has to be an apostasy. First and second, it says there has to be this man of lawlessness he's described in many ways, but it's talking about the Antichrist. And Daniel talks about him, Jesus talks about him, Paul talks about him, John talks about him. And this man of lawlessness is revealed, the Son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so called God or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. We first run into this man of lawlessness in Daniel chapter nine.

And we know from what's taught there that in the middle of the tribulation he is going to reveal himself and going to be in the temple and we'll talk about what that means later. There's a lot of different opinions what that means. And he is going to demand worship. And those who know their God will stay faithful even to the point of death. Those who think they're Christians that are not, they're going to capitulate and give in because it's going to be so convincing.

So. So he says two things have to happen, the apostasy. And we can go into Matthew 24, where Jesus said the same thing, and the abomination that causes desolation. And it's important that we understand that. And so I'm going to spend a few weeks on this passage trying to work through it as far as what it means and how it applies to us.

But we need to realize there's a lot of difference of opinion. I changed my mind about what I believe clear back in 1980, the fall of 80. I was raised pre Trib. I was taught pre Trib. I taught pre trib.

Russia had invaded Afghanistan, and everybody was, Jesus is coming. Jesus is coming. Everything. There's some kind of international crisis. People start, Jesus is coming.

So my church wanted to study Revelation. All I had was Late Great Planet by Hal Lindsay. And I was using that for my study notes. And as I read that, I kept coming across things that he said that I go, where does it say that? Where's that in the Scriptures?



And he base everything based on something, but it wasn't necessarily the Scripture. And so when I came across this passage in Second Thessalonians, chapter two, it was just like a light went off. Wait a second. It can't happen until after the Antichrist is revealed. And it's clear that's in the middle of tribulation.

I don't call myself mid Trib, post tribes, or any of those things. In fact, we want to get away from those labels. But if I had to describe myself, I'm pre wrath. We will not experience the wrath of God whenever that is. If that's at the start of the tribulation or at the middle of the tribulation, or later in the tribulation.

We are not destined for wrath. And so kind of a light went on with this passage and started to get a different opinion. It's not a popular opinion for a lot of people. And I don't want to be presenting something to you that's not based on Scripture. I don't want to present it because this is what I was taught or this makes sense to me.

And so I have purposely looked at the other side to make sure that I'm not promoting something that isn't scripture. And so I ordered this book the other day and catchy little title. They lied to you about the Rapture. They lied. And I wonder, well, who lied?

And he's basically saying, I lied. Now, I might be wrong, but that's not the same as lying, is it? Okay. And so I've been studying this now for 45 years, and I have yet to come across someone who explained this passage in 2 Thessalonians 2. They don't mention it and they just go over it.

And so what's this guy's belief in the pre Trib Rapture? It's that word imminent. It's imminent. It's imminent. And in their mind, imminent means next.

There's nothing left that has to happen. That's what 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 said. Was it okay? And it turns out the word imminent does not mean next. Any of you English majors know what imminent means at any time?

It could happen at any time. And that's true. And someone likened it to a card game. And I don't know if it's hearts or spades or which one of those that you can trump and you're playing along and man, I got an aces, I got an ace of clubs and I'm going to win

that trick. And you put it down and somebody throws a trump card down, whoops.

That can happen at any time. It doesn't have to be next, but at any time. And so we want to be careful that we're looking at the Scriptures. And some may say, well, why is this important?

It's important because we know that in the last days, the enemy is going to try to deceive the church. Now, I'm not saying that my way is the only way. Like I said, there's wonderful teachers on both sides of these issues, people who love the Lord. But I am saying instead of just relying on something I've been taught, we should be getting into the Scriptures. What does Jesus say and the purpose of that?

Again, I believe that we're going to go through part of the tribulation. Jesus said we would. We're not going to go through the wrath. Won't get into this now. But you don't see the word wrath in Revelation until the sixth seal.

The five before that. That's not Satan, that's not God, that's Satan. And we'll be looking at that a little more. And so if we're going to go through part of the tribulation, could you imagine as a pre tribber that all of a sudden in Israel or wherever that this guy stands up and says he's God and you better bow down and worship or we're going to cut your head off. And I think a lot of wait a second, I'm told this can't happen, that I won't be here.

And again, God gives us prophecy to prepare us so that we can stand faithful no matter what we face in this world. Pre trib rapulation is really popular in America. Things are going good. You know, we don't like it when there's any threat of things not going good. I guarantee it's not like that around the world.

There's people going through real tribulation that are being persecuted for their faith and that are dying for their faith. And guess what? They're praying Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus. And when it gets bad, we will be praying that also.

And so again, this is not something that should divide us. And if you don't believe what I believe, that's fine. There's things we agree on, okay? And it's enough. And I mean,

that's the way in life.

I mean, in your family, do you agree on everything? Well, get out of here then.

No, you agree to disagree on some things, right? And I believe this is one we should. Because it'd be nice if he spelled it out just a little clearer, okay? And said, this is the way it's going to happen. Boom, boom, boom, boom.

He doesn't. And when Jesus was teaching in Matthew 13, he taught parables. And afterwards, disciples asked, why are you speaking them in parables? And he said, well, so that those who are the children of the kingdom will understand, but those who are not won't. And you and I, as believers, there's things that God wants us to understand that the world will not.

And so we're going to be looking at this in the next few weeks. Hopefully it brings some clarity of mind to you. And again, I'm not here to change your mind. Hopefully what I can do is, as best as I can, present what the scriptures say and that will help prepare us for the day that Christ comes back. Let's pray.

And by the way, I didn't lie, okay? And for someone to say that and he just misrepresents the other view so badly and then calls it a lie, I'm just amazed. Let's pray.