

Jesus said, "Whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life..." (John 5:24).

TALK ABOUT 1. How can a person be saved from his or her sins? 2. Who is the final Judge (Matt 25:31–40)? 3. Whose names will be found in the Book of Life (Rev 3:5)? 4. We will all give account for the deeds done while we lived on the earth ___ True ___ False (Rom 14:13)? 5. Is your name in God's Book of Life?

IT IS NOT TOO LATE

Did this short study bring fear to your heart? Perhaps you are not sure if you are a Christian. It is not too late to repent of your sins and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. God commands all people everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). If you have never told God you are sorry for your sins, do it now. He is ready to forgive you and to take away your sins. God said, "I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (Heb 8:12).

Jesus died to take away all sin, past, present and future. Now God says to those who repent, "The Spirit of Life has set you free from the law of sin and death" and "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1–2).

Nothing you can do can save you. God's word says, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:23). Forgiveness and salvation from sin are God's free gift. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." Jesus said you will "cross over from death to life" (John 5:24).

Without Christ you face everlasting punishment in hell. Jesus Christ offers you life in heaven forever. He promised His own, "I will come back and take you to be with Me..." (John 14:2). You are free to choose (Deut 30:19–20). To choose Christ is the most important choice you will ever make.

TALK ABOUT 1. How with Jesus Christ come the second time (Matt 24:30–31)? 2. What promise did He make to the disciples (John 14:2–3)? 3. When Jesus Christ appears in the clouds it will be too late to repent ___ True ___ False? 4. Can our good deeds save us from judgment? 5. What is the greatest choice God has given to mankind? 6. Have you made that choice?

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The antichrist and Christ's return

by

Fred Morris

To the Reader: *Keep your Bible beside you. Read the Bible verses as you study. Most of the Bible verses are from the New International Version. You may have a King James Bible or another translation, so the words may be a little different, but the meaning will be the same. Ask God to guide your mind to know His truth. He has promised to do this for you (John 8:32).*

Ask a friend to join in the study with you. Share with a friend you may be able to help each other with something that is does not understand. Talk together about the questions. You will be blessed and so will your friend.

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS

In his letter to the Christians in Thessalonica, Paul gives more teaching on Christ's second coming. He wrote in a previous letter which we do not have about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit directed him to preach the gospel in this city of Macedonia (Acts 16:9–10). He went there with Silas, his companion who was also in prison with him at Philippi (Acts 16:19–29). When a riot arose (Acts 17:4) because they preached the gospel of Jesus Christ, the elders sent Paul and Silas away at night. Later Paul went to Athens, the chief city of Greece. From there he went to Corinth, where he stayed for a year and a half. During that time he wrote letters to the believers in Thessalonica.

THE RISE OF ANTICHRISTS

We could spell the title in two words "Anti-Christ." (or against Christ) This is the name Bible writers gave to one person or many persons who opposed Jesus Christ and His gospel. Paul seems to refer to one person or system with great power. Jesus said that every person who does not believe, is against Him or is an anti-Christ. "He who is not with Me," Jesus said, "is against Me" (Luke 11:23). No one can be neutral when it comes to faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God who came from heaven to die for the sins of the world (John 1:29).

Certainly those who teach what is different to God's word are anti-Christ. Such false teachers rose up inside the early churches. They preached Gnosticism (having a special knowledge of God saves you), or a revived Judaism, or some other cult. Paul met them in the Galatian church and condemned them (and also those believers who had been deceived by them) in one of his first pastoral letters (Gal 1:6–9).

John, in his pastoral letters wrote, "This is the last hour and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they really did not belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us..." (1 John 2:18–19).

standing before the throne "and the books were opened. If anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Rev 20:12,15).

"The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them" (Rev 20:13). Some Jews thought that only bodies buried in the earth could be resurrected and those who died in the sea were lost forever, but John saw that the spirits of ALL men and women of ALL times standing before the Judge. The prophet Daniel saw the same (Dan 12:2).

TALK ABOUT 1. Where did Moses see God do wonders? 2. Why did God say, "I am a jealous God" (Ex 20:5)? 3. Why does God leave wicked men on the earth? 4. Are you showing Christ's love to others?

THE LAST AND FINAL COURT

Most nations have a Supreme Court, where final judgments are made in the affairs of the citizens. Jews had the Sanhedrin, the highest court in Israel. The Romans had their Senate.

In Daniel's vision of the Court of Heaven, the last and final judgment, "the Ancient of Days took His seat... ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened" (Dan 7:9–10). After this final judgment, there would be no need of any another judgment.

The Father gave the Son authority to judge those standing before the throne (Matt 25:31–40; Rom 2:16).

Some see these books as: a) Books of man's conscience (Rom 2:15–16). b) Books of idle words (Matt 12:26). c) Books of dead works (Heb 9:14; Matt 16:27).

Then the Lamb's Book of Life was opened. Every person born into this world, every spirit given by God, has his or her name written in the Book of Life, God's register in heaven. But the names of multitudes who rejected Christ have been blotted out (Ex 32:33; Rev 3:5). Only those who have fully trusted Jesus Christ as their Saviour, have their names in the Book of Life (Rev 3:5; 20:12).

Jesus will say to them, "Come, you who are blessed by My Father, take your inheritance, the Kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world" (Matt 25:34).

If anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life, he will be thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:15).

None of these solemn words were written to reveal the course of events on that last Great Judgment Day. They were written to lead us to faith in Christ and to eternal life in Him (John 20:30–31).

Christ a name that is above every name. “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth (Sheol), and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:9–11).

Every eye will see Him and know that He is the Christ, the exalted One (Rev 1:7). And every spirit will fall before Him in worship. Every spirit will confess “that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:11).

OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE

Moses saw God judge Egypt with “and outstretched arm” (Psa 78:42–55). He saw God judge sin in the camp by “a consuming fire” (Num 11:1). He knew first hand what he was talking about when he told the people of Israel, “Our God is a consuming fire” (Deut 4:24).

1. The fire of God’s jealousy. God said to Israel, “I am a jealous God” (Ex 20:5). God said this when He gave the people His commandments. He told them “You shall not make for yourself an idol...” He alone must be worshipped.

Moses told them again, “Be careful not to forget the covenant of the Lord your God that He made with you (at Mt Sinai); do not make for yourself an idol. For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God” (Deut 4:24).

2. The refiner’s fire. God could have wiped all sinners off the face of the earth. He said the same to the Pharaoh of Egypt (Ex 9:15). But God was jealous for His own glory. He worked wonders in Egypt to show forth His power and His grace and He will continue to show His love to mankind until the end.

He spared the people of Israel for the same purpose – to refine them and bring forth a remnant that would be “holy unto the Lord.”

This remnant of faithful people would show forth His grace and power to their own generation and to all generations to come. He spares you and me for that same purpose only – to be His witnesses in the earth (Acts 1:8), and to show forth His power and glory.

THE DAY OF THE LORD’S JUDGMENT

3. Final judgment of this earth and its inhabitants. God told Moses, “For a fire has been kindled in My wrath, one that burns to the realm of death below. It will devour the earth and its harvest and set afire the foundations of the mountains” (Deut 32:22).

Peter declared, “But the Day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare” (2 Peter 3:10).

4. Final judgment will fall on all who reject Jesus Christ. In the Revelation Jesus Christ gave the apostle John a vision of the dead, great and small,

False teachers rose up inside the small groups of believers. Because they were not believers themselves, they resisted and opposed the truth. They were misfits! When they found they were not gaining converts, they went out to look for other places where they could preach their false doctrines.

Paul speaks of the rise of this person or system before Jesus comes again. He spoke of “the man of lawlessness.” (2 Thess 2:6–7).

TALK ABOUT 1. Who is Jesus Christ (Luke 1:30–32)? 2. Why did He come from heaven and live on earth (John 12:29)? 3. What did Paul preach (1 Cor 15:1–5)? 4. What had risen up in the churches to confuse the believers? 5. Had the believers been tricked? 6. How can we know what is true?

THE GOSPEL TAUGHT IN THE BEGINNING

John warned the believers, “See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you will remain in the Son and in the Father...” (1 John 2:24). Their faith in God would remain strong.

Paul reminded the Christians at Corinth of the gospel he preached. He said, “By this gospel you were saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. For what I preached I passed on to you as of first importance:

- a) that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures
- b) that He appeared to Peter and then to the Twelve
- c) After that He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living...” (1 Cor 15:1–6).

One kind of false teaching caused a lot of confusion. The false teachers said that Jesus Christ was not God come in a human body.

Paul said Jesus Christ “being in very nature God...made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human like ness...He humbled Himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross” (Phil 2:6–8). Jesus showed Himself to be God by healing the sick and raising the dead. He did miracles “that men might believe” that He came from the Father in heaven (John 1:14). And He returned to heaven (Acts 1:11).

John warned the believers to “continue in the truth...Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh have gone out into the world. Any such person is a deceiver and the antichrist” (2 John 7–9).

CHRIST’S SECOND COMING

Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica early in his ministry. He warned them about the false teachers. Some false teachers had said that Jesus Christ’s second coming had already passed. Believers were troubled by this teaching. Paul showed them the clear teaching that Jesus Christ would “come down from heaven with a loud command (Jesus said His voice would awaken the dead, John 5:27), with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God” (1 Thess 4:16–18). There would not be a silent rapture!

[This is the word we use to describe Jesus taking all the believers to Heaven.]

Neither believers nor unbelievers, living at the time, would miss this second coming of Christ. Paul warned them not to become “easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us...” The false teachers were writing letters and signing Paul’s name to them.

“Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our being gathered to Him...Don’t let anyone deceive you,” Paul wrote, “for that day (of Christ’s coming) will not come until the rebellion (a falling away, KJV) occurs and the man of lawlessness (man of sin, KJV) is revealed, the man doomed to destruction” (2 Thess 2:1–5).

Paul appears to identify a person of great power and authority when he says, “He will oppose and exalt himself over everything that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.” When Paul wrote this, the temple was still standing in Jerusalem. It was completely destroyed by the Romans in AD 70. So some see this “Man of Sin” setting himself up as God in a new temple which the Jews will build in Jerusalem at some future time.

TALK ABOUT 1. What caused the believers to be confused? 2. Why will no one miss the second coming of Jesus Christ (1 Thess 4:16)? 3. What were the false teachers saying? 4. What person or persons will oppose the gospel?

THE MAN OF SIN

Paul’s prophecy links the “Man of Sin” with a falling away from the faith or active rebellion against God and His word (the Greek word Paul used means “to depart from the truth”). This is not a falling away into a “God is dead” or a “no God” philosophy, but rather a corrupting of the truth.

We see this turning away from God’s truth on every hand. Men and women have no regard for God’s commands, which has resulted in open rebellion against moral values in our society (see Judges 21:25).

Many argue that this same condition happened long ago. And that the Bible is full of warnings against such disregard for God and shameful conduct. “The mystery of iniquity” was at work from the beginning or Paul would not have spoken of it (2 Thess 2:7). It is still at work and will continue until the end. He called it “a secret power” because it is beyond man’s ability to control it.

By the fourth century Christianity had compromised the truth and taken on pagan practices. This apostasy centered in the city of Rome. The men who took power in ‘the church’ did not hold the truth of God’s word, but claimed divine honours for themselves and made laws, requiring that men should worship them.

Him. They rejected Him at His first coming and brought judgment on themselves (John 3:36; Matt 23:38–39). And they will reject Him to the end (Rev 16:9). John’s words draw on the vision given to Zechariah.

God said, “I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication (prayer)” (12:10). The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of grace and truth. He bids all men and women make prayers or supplications to the Father in heaven.

Zechariah said, “They will look on (to) Me, the One they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only child” (Zech 12:10). We cannot be sure who ‘they’ are. Some think ‘they’ are the weeping people in Jerusalem, and the ones they pierced the sons of Judah who died in the battle of Megiddo. The people of Jerusalem wept over the death of young King Josiah when he was killed in battle fighting the Egyptians on the plains of Megiddo (Zech 12:11–14).

But in Isaiah’s “Servant Song,” Jesus Christ is the One ‘they’ pierced (Isa 53:12; John 19:37).

ALL THE EVIDENCE WILL BE PRESENTED

All hearts will be open before the Judge. God said, “Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Heb 4:12–13). The record of our lives and our works of faith, or lack of them, will reward or condemn us on that day.

Paul wrote, “There will be no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). The saved ones will not be judged for their sin, Christ already bore that in His own body on the cross. But all Christians will give an account for their deeds done while they were living in this world (Rom 14:12).

The prophet Daniel had a vision of this great multitude. He saw two groups of people and no more: some had been “awakened (and raised from the dust of the earth) to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan 12:2). Daniel also saw in a vision “the court and the Judge and His throne “flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze...” (Dan 7:9).

TALK ABOUT 1. God will judge all those who reject Jesus Christ ___ True ___ False? 2. Does God see everything we do and hear everything we say (Heb 4:12–13)? 3. What were the two groups of people Daniel saw in his vision (Dan 12:2). 4. Where were they gathered (Rev 20:12)? 5. What is the difference between the two groups? 6. Isaiah said “they will look on Him whom they pierced...” Who was he speaking about (Isa 53:12)?

EVERY KNEE WILL BOW

God raised Our Lord Jesus Christ to the highest place. Peter told the Jews, “Let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). And God the Father gave Jesus

teaching or Satan's lies. His words are "what they had heard from the beginning" (1 John 2:24). His words have not changed.

Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). Jesus is the word of truth. When Jesus met with His disciples for the last time before His death, He prayed for them. He prayed to the Father and said, "Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth" (John 17:17).

TALK ABOUT 1. Is there only one way to heaven (John 14:6)? 2. How can we know the truth? 3. Do you read the Bible every day?

EVERY EYE WILL SEE HIM

On that final Judgment Day all eyes will be fixed on the Messiah Christ. The aged apostle wrote, "Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of Him" (Rev 1:7, Zech 12:10). The Saviour will be their Judge (Rom 2:16).

"All the nations of the earth will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory" (Matt 24:30).

Jesus said that His coming would be spectacular. It would be seen universally. He said, "As the lightning... comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man."

Isaiah wrote, "And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it" (Isa 40:5).

God will open every eye to see Christ coming to gather His own – dead eyes, living eyes, all will see the King. "All the nations of the earth" will see Him. We believe this will happen in one moment of time (Matt 24:30–31). We have two kinds of eyes, physical eyes and the eyes of our hearts or spiritual eyes. The Pharisees saw Him with their physical eyes, but a veil covered the 'eyes' of their hearts (2 Cor 3:14–15). Some of the priests and leaders believed on Him. They saw Him with spiritual eyes (Acts 6:7).

The Pharisees will see Christ again, but as their Judge. Those who rejected Him will see Him come in His glory, but they will not share in it. Those who received Him in His humility will share in His glory, "they will see Him and they will be like Him." (1 John 3:2).

TALK ABOUT 1. Every eye will see Christ come again in the clouds ___ True ___ False? 2. Will all Christ's words come true? 3. Who will judge those who do not believe (Rom 2:16)? 4. What did Jesus say to doubting Thomas (John 20:29)? 5. Have you believed in Jesus Christ, the Son of God? 5. Will God bless those who doubt His word (James 1:6–7)?

TERROR WILL STRIKE THEIR HEARTS

The sight of Christ's coming will put terror in the hearts of those who pierced

This apostasy would continue until the parousia, the second coming of Jesus Christ. At that time, the Man of Sin would be revealed and destroyed "by the splendour of His coming" (2 Thess 2:8; Isa 11:4). No battle will take place.

THE TEMPLE AND PROPHECIES OF THE END TIME

Paul wrote to believers of the events that would happen before the second coming of Jesus Christ (2 Thess 2:1–12). He said the "Man of Sin" would set himself up in the temple of God. The word translated 'temple' is used nine times by Paul. He said to the men of Athens, "The God who made the world and everything in it... does not live in temples built by hands" (Acts 17:24). The people are the temple of God, Sometimes called the Church of Christ, His Kingdom here on earth (1 Cor 3:16–17). Peter wrote to believers, "You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house..." (1 Peter 1:5).

Paul warned the believers in Corinth that there is no agreement between the temple of God, His people, and idols (2 Cor 6:14–18). He was telling them not to be "yoked together with unbelievers," either in marriage, business or fellowship. But to "come out from them and be separate." Two oxen or two donkeys when they are yoked together go the same way. God does not want you to go the same way as unbelievers.

We conclude that Paul's reference (2 Thess 2:7–9) to the "temple of God" is to the Christian Church, and that the Man of Sin will assume his authority over a counterfeit church calling itself "Christian."

The Man of Sin will sit or set up in the temple of stone. He will have a throne there. From the Greek word we get our word "Cathedral" which means "the Bishop's seat."

So we see that this person or system takes the place of God, or sits God's place (2 Thess 2:4). The ruler of Tyre used the same words: "I am a god; I sit on the throne of a god" (Ezek 28:1). The Man of Sin makes the same claim.

He is called "the son of perdition" (KJV), a title given to Judas, the disciple who with a betrayed Jesus with a kiss (John 17:12). He will be a fraud, like Judas, looking good on the outside, but deceiving millions with his boastful words.

TALK ABOUT 1. Where did the false teachers come from? 2. What did they teach? 3. Who betrayed Jesus with a kiss? 4. What will the world be like when Jesus comes again (Matt 24:37)?

AN ALLY OF SATAN

The "lawless one" will demonstrate the works of Satan. Satan will use the Man of Sin who will do "signs and wonders" to deceive people. Paul says they are "counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing" (2 Thess 2:9–10). Only those on the road

to ruin will be deceived (2 Cor 4:4). Only those who worship in the counterfeit 'church' will believe the 'signs and wonders done by Satan.

The system put in place in Rome in the fourth century gradually spread its influence across the Roman Empire. It was headed by a 'Bishop' or 'Pope' who demanded total worship and complete loyalty. This was something true believers could not give and millions died for their faith.

The expression "Man of Sin" could mean one individual or a succession of individuals. All the popes sat in the 'seat' of power, spoke words contrary to the truth and demanded worship.

Whichever one we choose (a single person or a system of false teaching), he or it was then, and is now, being held back "so that he may be revealed at the proper time" (2 Thess 2:6). Paul said the believers would know "what is holding him (the lawless one) back."

DANIEL'S PROPHECY OF THE LITTLE HORN

Any time the subject of Antichrist is discussed, Daniel's prophecies are presented. The "Little Horn" of Daniel's vision fits Paul's description of the "Man of Sin." The little horn of Daniel's vision will appear in the last days and: "Speak words against the Most High (a title given to God), He will wear out the saints. He will think to change times and laws and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time" (Dan 7:21–25; 8:9; 11:36–37).

His words will seek to set God aside and put himself forward. He will take to himself honours that rightly belong only to the living God. In this way, and by persecution, he will try to wear out the saints and destroy their faith.

He will seek to change the times or seasons set by God and laws (Gen 1:14; 17:21; 18:14).

Some Bible teachers equate the period given in vague words in Daniel – "a time and times and half a time" – with the three and a half years or the last part of Daniel's 70th week, a period of great tribulation. We believe the period of the Little Horn's 'reign' is not defined and cannot be calculated. It will be a time of testings and trials for God's people which, for their sakes, will be cut short (Matt 24:22).

The time period expressed in Daniel's prophecy is not literal time but prophetic or symbolic time, as were the symbols of beast, horns, mouth and eyes. The same is true of the time periods set out in Daniel 9:24–27.

TALK ABOUT 1. How is the Little Horn in Daniel's vision (Dan 7:21–25) like the lawless one in Paul's letter? 2. What system started in Rome and spread around the world? 3. Jesus said this time of testing will be cut short. Why?

THE "SEVENTY SEVENS" OF DANIEL

Daniel was a prophet of the exile. In 586 BC Nebuchadnezzar attacked

Thess 4:16). Whether they were alive on the earth or 'asleep' in their graves, they would not miss Christ's second coming.

Jesus said, "All who are in their graves will hear His voice and come out..." (John 5:28–29).

Paul joined this great event – the second coming of Jesus Christ – with the destruction of those who do not believe. He wrote, "While people are saying 'Peace and safety,' destruction will come on them suddenly...and they will not escape" the judgment of God. (1 Thess 5:3)

THE DAY OF THE LORD

Peter tells us that certain things will happen in the future:

- a) The world will get worse (Matt 24:37-38).
- b) Jesus Christ will come again (2 Peter 3:4).
- c) Judgment comes to all mankind (2 Peter 3:7).
- d) The world and all that is in it will be burned with fire (3:10–12).
- e) The city of God, the New Jerusalem will appear (3:13).
- f) God's patience waits for the last person to be saved (3:15).

The Bible does not teach two resurrections, at different times in God's calendar, or many judgments. When Jesus comes again, this age of grace will be over. No more people will be saved. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ now, while Jesus waits.

At Christ's 'parousia' (His second coming), "every eye will see Him" (Rev 1:7; 1 Thess 4:16–18). Since all believers look for Christ's soon return, they must live holy lives (2 Peter 3:14). Jesus delays His parousia so that more people can be saved. God said, "He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

Jesus also said, "And this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matt 24:14). All events, even those spawned by the powers of evil, are under God's control (1 Chron 21:1; 1 Kings 22:23).

TALK ABOUT 1. Peter said he wrote to remind the Christians of two things (2 Peter 3:1–2)? 2. Why does Christ delay His coming again (2 Peter 3:9,15; Matt 24:14)? 3. Name some of the things that will happen on "the Day of the Lord" (2 Peter 10–13)? 4. What should believers be doing while Jesus waits?

LET HIS WORD REMAIN IN YOU

Jesus said, "I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. If you obey My commands, you will remain in my love..." (John 15:1–9).

Jesus is the bread of life. His word feeds our hungry souls. Read His words often and hide them in your heart and you will not be deceived by false

In 330 AD Constantine took the seat of power to Constantinople. The Bishop of Rome took the 'seat' of the Caesars and became the strongest man in the western world of that time.

THE FALSE TEACHERS DENIED THE TRUTH

There were Ebionites who said Jesus was a mere man. Gnostics who said they had superior knowledge, Deoists who taught that Christ's body was a phantom or ghost and not real flesh. Followers of Theodotus said Jesus was only a man and the Colossian people who denied Christ's deity. All denied the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us" (John 1:14). They robbed the Saviour of the glory that rightly belonged to Him as Son of God, Creator of all things and Redeemer of sinful men and women.

They reject the truth, Paul said. "They claim to know God, but by their actions (the way they live) they deny Him" (Titus 1:16). Jesus said, "By their fruit you will recognize them" (Matt 7:16).

John asked, "Who is a liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the Antichrist – he denies the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22–23).

John was not speaking of atheists, but of those who professed to be Christians. They did not deny that there was a living God who sent His Son to die for man's sin. They denied Christ by believing a lie and by the way they lived. Jesus said, "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inside they are ferocious wolves" (Matt 7:15).

Paul said, "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator – who is forever praised" (Rom 1:25).

Peter said, "There will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Sovereign Lord who bought them – bringing swift destruction on themselves" (2 Peter 2:1–2).

TALK ABOUT 1. What heresies were common in the early churches? 2. All the false teachers denied that Jesus Christ was G.....'s S..... and come to earth as a man. 3. Many early church fathers believed the R..... E..... was holding back the Man of Sin's rise to power.

CHRIST WILL DESTROY THE LAWLESS ONE

"And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of His mouth, and destroy by the splendour of His coming" (2 Thess 2:8). This will happen in a moment of time!

Paul told the believers how Jesus would come in the clouds of heaven. He would come "with a loud command...and with the trumpet call of God" (1

Jerusalem and carried its people to Babylon. Daniel was a young Jewish lad who trusted God and searched the Scriptures to learn what would happen to his people after the exile in Babylon. God sent the angel Gabriel to tell Daniel, "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people..." (Dan 9:24–27).

God was in control of events in Babylon where the people of Israel were captives. Many speak of the "seventy weeks" or the "62 weeks" of Daniel 9:25, but the Bible does not say weeks. The word "times" could well mean periods of time of indefinite length. We are not told how long the periods are to be, and different nations used different calendars to set dates.

Gabriel told Daniel six things that would happen. Not all agree on the meaning of these six things.

1. To finish or hold back sin and wrong. 2. To seal up or put away sin. 3. To wipe away all wickedness. (These different words – transgression, sin and wickedness – all mean sin (Psa 32:5)). Some argue that we don't see sin put away; it is still very much with us! 4. To bring in everlasting righteousness. 5. To seal up vision and prophecy. 6. To anoint the Most Holy, or the most holy One.

The "Anointed One" speaks of Messiah-Christ. The prophet said, "He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of My people He was stricken..." (Isaiah 53:8). Jesus came to earth to establish His Kingdom. He came once (Dan 2:34,43–45). He was killed once! Now He reigns forever in the hearts of His people! (Rev 1:18; 7:9).

We believe these six things or prophecies were fulfilled when Jesus Christ rose from the dead and returned to heaven (Acts 1:11).

TALK ABOUT 1. What did God say would happen to the people of Judah (Jer 25:8–11)? 2. How did Daniel know this? 3. Why were God's people taken to Babylon? 4. How did Daniel pray (Dan 9:19)? 5. Did God answer Daniel's prayer? a) For the people of Judah? b) For the remnant who loved God (Jer 23:3) c) For Daniel to understand what would happen to the faithful remnant?

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND DANIEL'S PROPHECY

A masterful commentator said this of Daniel's "seventy sevens." prophecy: "The sevens are not to be taken as weeks of years, but as symbolical numbers. After the seventy years of exile (in Babylon, Jer 25:8–14), there is to follow a period of indefinite length... which will endure as long as the world and time... This period is divided into three parts. The first of these, designated as seven sevens begins with the edict of Cyrus (which allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem, Ezra 1), and extends to the appearance of an Anointed One... namely Christ....

Following this is a period of 62 sevens. During this time there will be a returning and rebuilding, figurative expressions for the preaching of the Gospel. This is to occur in the affliction of the times...and will continue until the Anointed One is cut off...Then follows a third period... when Christ is cut off and has no power over the world. Then will appear a prince opposed to God...The people of this wicked price will destroy God's city and sanctuary, and war and desolations will continue unto the end. This last seven comprises the period of the domination of this prince, the Antichrist. His domination is brought to a close by the absolute consummation (of the world)"

- after Klieforth's Commentary, 1868, quoted in "*Daniel*" by Ed Young, p193.

THE RUIN OF SATAN'S KINGDOM

Satan's power was brought down and made ineffective by Christ's death on the cross (Heb 2:14). Yet Satan's subjects live in the world side by side with God's children. Jesus said the 'weeds' would 'grow together' with the wheat (Matt 13:29) until the end (Matt 13:37-43). Then Christ will send His angels and destroy the weeds.

The false teachers and all the subjects of Satan's Kingdom will perish. Even now "they are perishing because they refused to love the truth and so be saved" (2 Thess 2:10). "Had they loved the truth, they would have persevered in it and been preserved by it" (Matthew Henry).

Jesus used a parable (a story with a double meaning) to show that His power is greater than Satan's power. He asked the crowd a question, "How can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless (being stronger than the strong man) he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob the strong man's house" (Matt 12:29). Jesus is stronger than Satan. He broke into Satan's kingdom and set his prisoners free. They are set free from Satan's power when they receive Jesus as their Saviour. God's Spirit in them gives them power to overcome Satan's temptations.

When it comes to faith in Jesus Christ, you cannot 'sit on the fence' as we say. You cannot be neutral about Jesus. You must choose who you will follow. You are either in Satan's camp, or in God's Kingdom.

The prophet Elijah said to the people, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal (the idol many of them worshipped) is God, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21).

John said, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, but God's wrath remains on him" (John 3:36).

You need to choose Jesus Christ, or face the judgment of God.

WHAT HOLDS THE MAN OF SIN BACK?

What is holding this evil one in check? No one can be sure, but God allows something to hold back (Luke 4:41) the full force of evil until Christ comes again to gather His own (1 Thess 4:16-18; Matt 24:22).

Many believe the one holding back evil is the Holy Spirit. He uses the gospel of Jesus Christ and the witness of God's people to restrain the work of Satan.

God is building His temple, the Kingdom of God, and Jesus said even the gates of hell could not stop the advance of His Church (Matt 16:18).

If Paul had been referring to the Holy Spirit or the Christian Church as the force holding back evil, he would not have used veiled language. There would have been no reason for him not to say what he had in mind.

That the believers would be taken out of the world before "the man of sin" is revealed is not what the Bible teaches. The Antichrist has always been seen as a persecuting power which would come against believers and "wear them out" until the end of the age.

During the Dark Ages it is said that over 50 million Christians were tortured and killed for their faith.

Jesus said, "When He comes, will He find (any) faith in the earth"? And "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man" (Matt 24:37).

TALK ABOUT 1. Does God give every person who hears the gospel the freedom to choose Jesus? 2. What did the prophet Elijah say to the people who worshipped the idol Baal? 3. Do you believe the way you live pleases God? 4. Why does God hold back the full force of evil (2 Peter 3:15; Matt 24:14)?

THE ROMAN EMPIRE AND THE CAESARS

Many early church fathers believed it was the Roman Empire which held back the rise of Romanism. Jerome (ca. 347-419) noted Bishop and translator of the Bible wrote, "He (Paul) shows that which restrains is the Roman Empire...for unless it shall have been destroyed, and taken out of the midst, according to the prophet Daniel, Antichrist will not come before that" (Jerome, Commentaria, Book 5, chapter 25).

Again, "The fathers of the church (Irenaeus, 130-200; Chrysostom 347-407 and Jerome) are right who identified it (that which restrains) with the Empire of Rome and its head" (Expositors Bible Commentary).

Paul did not say this because it would have brought even more terrible persecutions on the Christians.

History tells us that when the Caesars fell from power and the Roman Empire faded into a collection of lawless states, a new power rose up to control the minds of the people. It was the power of the popes.