There is probably no more mysterious and fascinating figure spoken of in the Bible than Antichrist. He has been the focus of a great deal of speculation among students of prophecy and the subject of countless books. Over the centuries I suppose everyone has wondered at one time or another whether some current evil leader in the world might morph into that tragic figure. While we’re going to examine carefully what our Scripture passage says about Antichrist, it is critical that we see him not as the focal point of human history but only as a tragic blip before the real Focal Point, which is the Second Coming of Christ.

After two somewhat controversial sermons on biblical prophecy over the past month, someone asked me, “Pastor, why do we need to give so much attention on the timing of these events? Since that is what seems to cause disagreement between Christians, why not just preach on the fact that Jesus is coming again, the fact that there will be a Great Tribulation, and the fact that the Church will be raptured, and just ignore the order of these events? After all, it’s going to happen just the way God wants it to happen anyway.”

I appreciate the question. It’s a good question. I also think there’s a good answer. The biblical writer does not ignore the timing issue. Let’s look back for a moment at the great Rapture passage in 1 Thess 4:13-18 that we studied a month ago and take note of some of the timing words:

4:15 those who are left until the coming of the Lord
4:15 will not precede those who have fallen asleep
4:16 the dead in Christ will rise first
4:17 Then we who are alive

In 2 Thess the timing words are even more dominant:
1:7 when the Lord Jesus is revealed . . . in flaming fire
1:10 when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints
2:3 That day will not come unless the rebellion comes first
2:6 now so that he may be revealed in his time
2:7 The mystery of lawlessness is already at work
2:8 And then the lawless one will be revealed

Obviously the relationship between these events is very much on the Apostle’s mind. We must not ignore what he does not ignore.

In our two previous messages on prophecy from 1 Thessalonians, I acknowledged that one cannot prove the timing of the Rapture relative to the Tribulation from those texts, though I presented what I believe to be some strong hints that the Church will go through the Tribulation.
There was additional evidence in Josh’s passage last week. Did you notice it? Paul told the Thessalonian Christians that relief would come to them (1:7-8) “when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.” Is he talking about relief through a pretrib rapture? No, because the verse goes on to say, “when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus.” When will that happen? Clearly at the time of the Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation. That is when relief will come to the Church.

Today we have a passage where, in my estimation, a secret rapture, separated from the Second Coming by seven years, simply doesn’t fit. And if it doesn’t fit the context of 2 Thess 2, I suggest to you that it’s not wise to try to make it fit in 1 Thess 4 or 5 or 2 Thess 1. Let’s read 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12:

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, 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, 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 when 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 one 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 refused 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.

Paul’s overarching theme in this passage is the Second Coming and the Rapture of the Church. (1)

In the first verse the Apostle lays his subject matter on the table: “Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him.” Obviously, “our being gathered together” is a reference to the Rapture. To what then does the Coming of our Lord Jesus refer—to the Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation or a secret coming before the Tribulation? We have a very strong hint right in this passage, for the exact same word for coming is used again in verse 8 where we are told Jesus will kill the Antichrist by the appearance of His coming (parousia). Everyone agrees that Antichrist is destroyed at the end of the Tribulation. So if the parousia in verse 8 is the Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation, then it seems only reasonable that the parousia referred to in verse 1 is the same. And he mentions the parousia before the Rapture.
Now isn’t it interesting that Paul states that his theme is the Second Coming and the Rapture, and yet most of his teaching is on Antichrist? How do you explain that? Frankly, I think it can only be explained by the fact that the people he is writing to need to be prepared for what is coming before they are raptured, namely the appearance of Antichrist.

Now since most of Paul’s teaching in the Thessalonian letters is a response to issues in the church that Timothy has reported back to him, let’s ask what specific problem generates Paul’s teaching here? In 1 Thess 4 we concluded it was the problem of bereavement. In 1 Thess 5 we decided it was the problem of judgment. Here it seems to me to be the problem of heresy, generated by persecution.

**Persecution has generated heresy regarding the Day of the Lord. (2:1-3)**

Some are teaching that the Day of the Lord has already arrived. (2) What is this Day of the Lord? We answered that a few weeks ago. It is the day of judgment. In fact, I believe it is the climactic point of the Tribulation period when God pours out His wrath on the earth. What seems to have happened in the church at Thessalonica is that the believers have been enduring so much suffering and persecution that some have concluded that they are already in the Day of the Lord, that the Day of Final Judgment has arrived. I wouldn’t be surprised if that thought has crossed the minds of some believers in Japan over the past few weeks, especially as the nuclear reactors started to melt down. I suspect some of the Christians in Sudan and North Korea have at times wondered the same thing.

Of course, that is not a problem we struggle with here in America, is it? We know very little about persecution and suffering. We actually struggle with the opposite problem. We not only aren’t worried that we are in the Day of the Lord; we think we’ll never see that day. Many contemporary Christians are counting on the Rapture as The Great Escape from the entire period of Tribulation. And even though our problem is different, ironically the solution is the same—we need Paul’s teaching here absolutely as much as the first century Christians needed it—so that we will not be caught off guard and be totally unprepared for the perseverance those days will require.

Paul has great sympathy for the plight of his Thessalonian brothers. In fact, he has already mentioned their suffering several times in these two letters. But as bad as the persecution is, he wants them to know they are not in the Day of the Lord.

Paul doesn’t know where this heresy originated but he flatly denies it. (2-3) He does suggest three possible sources: a demon, a false teacher, and a forged letter as though from him. Whatever the source, it has shaken the believers and alarmed them unnecessarily, so Paul goes on to say, “Let no one deceive you in any way.” He could hardly make his objection any stronger. He states, “For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed.” Two things must happen before the Day of the Lord arrives, and thus before the parousia and the Rapture.
1. The rebellion must occur first. (3)
2. The Rebel must appear first. (3)

Now friends, there is no more crucial verse in the entire New Testament on the question of when the Rapture occurs in relationship to the Tribulation. If Paul were pre-trib, what is the simplest possible way for him to put the troubled minds of the Thessalonian believers at ease? It would simply be to say, “You can’t be in the Day of the Lord, because the Rapture hasn’t occurred yet. You’re going to be outa here!” End of false alarm. End of troubled spirits. But he doesn’t. Instead he tells them that two events must come first, events that nearly all prophecy students, even pre-tribulationists, acknowledge are Tribulation events.

1. The rebellion will occur first. What exactly is this rebellion of which Paul speaks? The term for rebellion in Greek is *apostasia*, a word we have brought right into the English language as “apostasy.” Apostasy is a falling away from the faith, even a stand against the faith. It is used in a very familiar passage in 1 Timothy 4:1: “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times (or in the last times) some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons.” The term “depart from the faith” or “abandon the faith” (NIV) is the verb form of *apostasia*.

We all know, of course, that apostasy has always been present in Christendom. We see it clearly today as theologians and pastors jettison difficult doctrines and try to bring the Christian faith in line with postmodern culture. Some entire denominations have gone into apostasy. But here in 2 Thess 2:3 Paul speaks not just of apostasy but of “the” apostasy, “the” rebellion–one that is distinguishable from all others. I think that can be satisfied only by the apostasy described in tribulation passages like Matthew 24:9-12:

> “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.”

The logical force of Paul claiming that this sign that must precede the Day of the Lord is recognized by some pre-tribulationists, who have then felt the need to reinterpret this verse completely. They claim that if the root meaning of *apostasia* is “falling away,” as in “falling away from the faith,” why couldn’t it just as well mean “falling away upward”? In other words, it refers to the Rapture. If so, Paul was saying exactly what the pretrib view claims—that the Day of the Lord can’t arrive until the Rapture occurs. The problem is that this is an interpretation forced on a text to solve a theological problem rather than an interpretation that comes out of the text. The fact is there is no known use of the term *apostasia* in Greek anywhere that means “falling away upward.”

Now in all fairness I want to make it clear that not all pre-tribulationists give credence to this tortuous interpretation. *Most simply leave this problem unaddressed.* But even if one could establish that *apostasia* refers to the Rapture, that still does not explain the second event Paul
speak must happen:

2. The Rebel must appear first. (3) Here we are introduced for the first time in the Thessalonian letters to that man of lawlessness known as Antichrist, and he will consume the rest of our time today. In fact, there is so much information right here that we are not even going to go to other confirming passages, like Daniel 7-12 and Matthew 24 and Revelation 13, which also speak of this end-time ruler. As providence would have it, our Daniel study tonight also majors on Antichrist. But this morning we will stick with 2 Thess 2.

John Stott suggests that this Chief Rebel from the end times is given four names or titles in 2 Thess 2:

   He is “the Antinomian,” the man of lawlessness. (3) Some versions read “man of sin,” but the better manuscripts read “man of lawlessness.” The difference is not great, for 1 John 3:4 specifically says, “sin is lawlessness.” The term antinomian simply means “against law.”

   Antichrist is hostile to the rule of law–moral law, civil law, and especially God’s law.

   He is “the Doomed,” the son of destruction. (3) The NIV translates it “the man doomed to destruction.” The term is a Hebraism meaning that his destiny is ruin.

   He is “the Enemy,” opposing every god or object of worship. (4) He will not only be the political enemy of the Jewish nation; he will be the religious enemy of biblical Christianity, of mainline churches and Buddhism and Hinduism and cults and the occult. All religion will be labeled as a superstitious crutch and fanaticism. But at the same time, . . .

   He is “the Climber,” exalting himself, proclaiming himself God. (4) “He takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.” Commentators are in disagreement as to whether this verse demands that the Temple in Jerusalem be rebuilt before this could happen. I think it may well be, for there are Orthodox Jews today who have intricate plans to rebuild the Temple on Mount Moriah where today the Mosque of Omar stands, and they are even collecting vessels and building materials.

However, we should also remember that both the Church and individual believers are called God’s temple in the NTvi, so it is possible this refers to Antichrist’s attempts to infiltrate and capture Christendom. His ultimate blasphemy, of course, is proclaiming himself to be God. Having set himself against every object of worship, he will demand for himself the worship which he has forbidden to everybody and everything else.vii

The Church needs to be alert to the appearance of the Rebel (Antichrist). (5-10)

In verse 5 he chides them: “Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?” How often we remember what we should forget and forget what we should remember!
**He is a real person, historical yet future. (3-10)** Some today scoff at the “myth of Antichrist,” suggesting that what we’re dealing with here is not dissimilar to Bigfoot or the Loch Ness Monster, or the aliens of Los Alamos, firmly entrenched in human folklore, but no more real. What has perhaps contributed to this attitude is the fact that Christians down through the centuries have tended to identify many of their enemies as Antichrist, with the result that we may have cried “wolf” too often. Among the first candidates were certain Roman emperors, especially Nero and Caligula, then Mohammed, then many of the corrupt popes of the middle ages. Emperor Frederick II and Pope Gregory IX found satisfaction in calling each other the Antichrist. Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and Knox all believed the Papacy itself was the Antichrist, and they said so explicitly in the footnotes of the earliest English Bibles, as well as in the Westminster Confession. The Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation returned the favor by identifying Luther as the Antichrist in the first Catholic version of the English Bible.

There have also been many political leaders down through the centuries who have been labeled as Antichrist. Candidates include Napoleon, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Idi Amin, Sadam Hussein, and Kim Jong II. Rather than scorn these identifications, however, perhaps it would be better to recognize in some of them true forerunners of that final man of sin who will be the leader of the ultimate rebellion against God and His people.

Friends, it boils down to this: whether we believe in the literal coming of Antichrist depends largely on whether we still believe in the literal coming of Christ, for the one is as clearly taught in Scripture as the other. If words mean anything at all, 2 Thess 2 speaks of a real historical yet future person.

**His influence (called the secret power of lawlessness) is already at work. (7)** As we have said, there have been plenty of precursors who have served to set the table for Antichrist. The Apostle John saw them even in the first century. Listen to several passages from his epistles: 1 John 2:18: “Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.”

In 1 John 2:22 he tells us how we can identify these antichrists: “Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the Antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.” In 1 John 4:3 he writes, “Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.” And in 2 John 1:7 we are warned, “For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.”

Now in none of these passages is John denying that a personal, historical Antichrist will yet come; he simply wants us to realize that when he comes, his predecessors will have already been here exercising the power of lawlessness.

Paul seems to agree with John, as he says in 2 Thes 2:7, “The mystery of lawlessness is already at work.” Antichrist himself will not be revealed until the appropriate time, but the evil influence
he is famous for is already permeating society, culture, government, and even the Church.

**There is a restraining influence that currently keeps him in check. (5-8)** This is one of the most controversial references in this text, so let’s consider three facts that I think we can all agree on:

1. The restrainer is known to the church at Thessalonica but not to us. (5-6)
2. The restrainer is both *something* and *someone*. (6-7)
3. When the restrainer stops restraining, Antichrist will be revealed. (7b-8)

1. **The restrainer is known to the church at Thessalonica but not to us. (5-6)** In verse 6 Paul states, “And you know what is restraining him now.” Isn’t that interesting, since he doesn’t tell *us* what it is? In fact, he speaks quite guardedly, as though there may be something keeping him from being more forthright.

2. **The restrainer is both *something* and *someone*. (6-7)** Part of the mystery surrounding this restraining influence is that Paul uses both the neuter and the masculine to refer to it. In verse 6 he speaks of “*what* is restraining him now,” and in verse 7 he speaks of “*he who* now restrains.” So whatever it is, it seems to have both a personal and perhaps institutional aspect.

3. **When the restrainer stops restraining, Antichrist will be revealed. (7b-8)** “Only he who now restrains it (i.e. the mystery of lawlessness) will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed.” The NIV speaks of the restrainer being “taken out of the way,” while the ESV speaks of it as simply “out of the way.” The Greek literally reads, “until he comes out of the midst.” The grammatical construction is middle voice, not passive. The bottom line is that the restrainer quits restraining, and when that happens all hell will break lose.

OK, we can all agree on these three things. So what or who is the restrainer? I don’t know, and I don’t think anyone else does. There have been many suggestions, with three dominating. Almost all pretribulationists believe the restrainer is the Holy Spirit. It is argued, the Spirit is currently restraining lawlessness through His indwelling of the believing church. But when the Church is raptured, the Holy Spirit will be removed along with the Church. The term “spirit” in Greek is neuter but the Holy Spirit is always addressed in the masculine, so that might account for the fact that the restrainer is both a force and a person.

But there are several problems with identifying the restrainer as the Holy Spirit. Why didn’t Paul just say the Holy Spirit? Why does he speak in such cautious, guarded terms? More importantly, we know there will be people saved throughout the Tribulation period; e.g., the tribulation martyrs in Rev.12:11, and the 144,000 who are sealed in Rev. 14. But how can anyone be saved if the Holy Spirit is absent?

A second common view of the restrainer is that it is God Himself. The reason Paul doesn’t name Him might be that he didn’t need to–God has always been recognized as the primary restrainer of evil in the world. The masculine would refer to God’s person and the neuter to His power. The
main argument against this explanation is the translation “until he is taken out of the way,” for how can anything outside of God remove Him? But as we have already shown, the verb here is not passive, so all it really says is that the restrainer stops restraining. Perhaps there comes a point when God simply says, “I’ve had enough with the sin and corruption in this world. I’m going to quit holding back the evil.” That would certainly explain the awful evil that occurs in the Tribulation.

A third widely held view down through the centuries is that Paul is referring to the power of the state as the restrainer. The natural restrainer of lawlessness is the law. You will recall that in Romans 13 Paul regarded the state as God’s agent for the punishment of evil. Perhaps Paul needed to be cautious with his words because Rome would not take kindly to any hint that its power was going to dissipate. The combination of the neuter and masculine is also easily explained, referring to the empire and the emperor, justice and the judge, the law and the one who enforces it.

I am personally inclined toward the view that God Himself is the restrainer, but I would not want to be dogmatic about it.

**He will counterfeit the coming of Christ. (9)** He will do this in at least three specific ways: His coming will be personal, visible and powerful.

1. **His coming will be personal; he will stage his own Parousia.** In fact, verse 9 uses the term *parousia* of the coming of the lawless one.

2. **His coming will be visible; he will be revealed.** Three times, in verses 3, 6, and 8, Paul mentions that he will be revealed, using the same term as Christ being revealed from heaven in 2 Thess 1:7.

3. **His coming will be powerful; he will do miracles, false signs and wonders.** The reason he can do these things is that he will be energized by Satan. The term translated “power” is a term often used of miracles. By calling his signs and wonders “false,” I don’t believe Paul is necessarily calling them fake but rather indicating that they will deceive rather than lead to truth. In fact, wicked deception is mentioned in verse 10 as the result of his signs and wonders.

But the Rebel will not succeed indefinitely; in fact, for only a short time.

**He will be overthrown and destroyed at the Second Coming. (8)** It says that “the Lord Jesus will kill him with the breath of his mouth and bring him to nothing by the appearance of his coming.” That reminds me of Luther’s great hymn, *A Mighty Fortress*, where it says of the Prince of Darkness that “one little word shall fell him.” The same will be true of Antichrist. Other Bible passages give us more information about his defeat at the Battle of Armageddon and his ultimate demise, along with the Satanic Trinity, in the Lake of Fire. Friends, this is the key thing for us to grasp:
Antichrist will not triumph;
evil will not triumph.
Christ will triumph!

Paul warns us about the slippery slope of unbelief. (10-12)

Let’s read verses 9-12 again:

“The coming of the lawless one 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 refused 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.”

How is it that Antichrist will succeed for a while in deceiving a large portion of the earth’s population? Well, he will undoubtedly have a very charismatic personality and silver tongue.

However, something else is at work here, too—something going on in the hearts and minds of people that makes Antichrist’s success possible. I am talking about a process that starts with a certain attitude toward truth and ends with condemnation. Both Satan and God Himself are active in this process.

Unbelievers refuse to love the truth and be saved. This doesn’t happen because of a lack of sufficient evidence for the truth; they simply refuse to believe. Over the years I have known few people who had real intellectual problems with the Gospel, but there are a lot of people who have moral problems with it. By that I mean they don’t want God telling them what to do or how to live. So they refuse to commit themselves to His truth.

This enables Satan to deceive them. The Evil One capitalizes on attitudes of skepticism and agnosticism. He has brilliant scientists and college professors and cultural icons all too eager to capture the minds of those wavering in their faith. Now please understand, I am not suggesting that Christians should just swallow whatever they are taught by their pastors and Christian leaders. Doubt can be a very useful tool in examining whatever we hear—whether from the media or the pop culture or the pulpit. But when biblical truth has been confirmed down through the centuries, even for millennia, yet we decide as individuals that we have the right to challenge it, that’s when Satan gets a foothold in a person’s life.

But there’s another step in this downward spiral, and that’s where God Himself steps in.

God responds with judicial hardening, resulting in further unbelief. It says that “God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false.” Some think this is not an appropriate business for God to be involved in—sending people strong delusions. God ought to be helping seekers, not blinding unbelievers. But He does both, and there are a number of passages that teach such. God hardened Pharaoh’s heart, but only after Pharaoh hardened his own heart. In Romans 2 God gives pagans over to the sinful desires of their hearts, but only after they
suppressed the truth by their wickedness. 1 Peter 2 says that Jesus is a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, but only because they have first disobeyed the message.

This is the grave danger in unbelief—that after God has given a person every chance and every evidence, He will eventually pull the plug and actually harden their hearts further—with the result that they believe the lie, the lie that Antichrist is God.

The end result is condemnation—for their unbelief and their delight in evil. The Bible teaches condemnation for all those who refuse to believe. They will be eternally shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of His power, as last week’s passage expresses it. They didn’t want God, so He will leave them alone. Ultimately I believe the worst thing about hell is that unbelievers will have their proof that God exists, and they will know that Jesus is exactly who He said He was, and they will recognize that salvation was their for the taking, simply by bowing the knee to Jesus—but they will be separated from Him forever.

Notice the two grounds for their condemnation—unbelief and their delight in unrighteousness. It’s both. People go to hell because of their sin but also because they refuse to put their faith in the only solution to that sin, provided by a loving God. That solution is Jesus. God sent His One and Only Son to die in our place that we might enjoy forgiveness and spend eternity in His presence.

Conclusion: Friends, this passage tells us that there is a time of restraint, a time of rebellion, and a time of retribution. Today is the time of restraint. It may not feel to you like evil is being restrained, but it is. There is coming, perhaps in our lifetime, a time of rebellion, actually “the” rebellion, when every expression of righteousness and faith will be under attack. And then will come the time of retribution—not for God’s children but for all who have refused to believe. “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him” (John 3:36).

i. Furthermore, please note that the Apostle mentions the parousia and Rapture together in verse 1; he uses only one article (the parousia and Rapture, not the parousia and the Rapture), indicating they are one event; and he even places the parousia before the Rapture. If Paul were pre-trib, shouldn’t he have switched the two events and said, “Now concerning the Rapture and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . since by the pretrib viewpoint the Rapture occurs seven years before the Second Coming?

ii. Leon Morris states that it is more than forsaking one’s first love and drifting into apathy; it is “a widespread and violent defiance of the authority of God.” See The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians, 219.

iii. Two pretrib scholars who advocated this interpretation are G. Christian Weiss (Re-thinking
the Rapture, 66-91) and Kenneth Wuest (Prophetic Light in the Present Darkness). John F. Walvoord gives the view extensive treatment, without criticism, though he does call it a “somewhat novel interpretation.” (See The Rapture Question, 71-72). Even Paul Feinberg, professor of theology at TEDS, gives some credence to this view, though he calls it “unlikely.” Interestingly, Feinberg, an ardent pre-trib, admits, “I think that it is fair to say that one could wish that Paul had answered the way Moo suggests (namely that Paul had told them the Day of the Lord can’t be here because the Rapture hasn’t occurred). It would have settled the matter.” See Archer, Feinberg, Moo, Reiter, The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulational, 228.

iv. I should also observe that one pretrib friend of mine has acknowledged this issue and has adjusted his view accordingly. He now suggests that the great apostasy will occur and the Antichrist will be revealed before the Tribulation starts, though I don’t know any other pretrib scholar who holds this view. I honor him for trying to harmonize his pretribulationism with 2 Thess 2, but I believe a far easier way to harmonize the rapture with 2 Thess 2 is to adopt post-tribulationism.


vi. E.g., Eph 2:21, 1 Cor. 3:17, 6:19


viii. Actually that’s a better argument for the mid-trib rapture view, and better still for the pre-wrath rapture view, because the chaos one might expect from the Holy Spirit’s absence is much more like what is described in the last half of the Tribulation, and even more like what is described when the sixth seal is opened and God’s wrath is poured out.

ix. Another argument against the identification of the restrainer as the Holy Spirit is seen in Mark 13. Most see the description of trouble starting in verse 9, if not before, as the Tribulation. Yet Jesus says that “when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious before hand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak but the Holy Spirit.”

x. As Daniel 7 affirms twice, he will have “a mouth speaking great things.” One can’t help but think of the speeches of Hitler that mesmerized an entire nation. Antichrist will also have a great ability with words.