

1 THESSALONIANS 4:15a "The Coming of the Lord and the Rapture Of The Church"

As we continue with our study in 1 Thessalonians let me remind you of what Paul's encouragement to the church in Thessalonica has been in connection with those Christians in that church who had died.

Many of the Thessalonians may have grieved over, not only the loss of a loved one, but also over what they may have felt was a disadvantage for these Christians who had died, as it related to the second coming of Christ.

As I mentioned last week the feeling in Thessalonica, evidently, was that the dead in Christ were at a disadvantage because they would not be present at the return of Jesus when He came back to catch His people away.

Having been taught about the resurrection they felt that the dead in Christ would eventually be raised, but as we see in our text the real issue was how it transpired in time. And there seemed to be some misunderstanding.

Their thought must have been that if you were alive at Christ's coming you would not miss any of the thrill and majesty of the King of kings coming back for His people as you experienced heaven opened up, seeing Jesus, the light of the world, radiate His love and glory right before your very eyes.

To see the host of heaven accompanying the risen Lord and all of the celebration that would usher in such an event; standing shoulder to shoulder with fellow believers and singing praises before your Lord. What an awesome time that would be.

And it was undoubtedly this kind of anticipation which left the Thessalonian Christians with a bitter sweet joy, thinking that their friends and relatives who died in Christ might miss this momentous occasion as the living got to experience it first-hand.

Paul says to them, 'I don't want you to be uninformed about this and grieve over your loved ones like the rest who have no hope. I want you to know that just as sure as Jesus rose from the dead, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.'

In other words, they're not going to miss out on anything, any more than our friends and loved ones who have died in the Lord will miss out on Christ's coming back. Whether they've been dead for a year, 50 years, or 2,000 years, it won't make any difference because they too will experience the same event at the same time when Jesus comes for us.

In fact, Paul goes so far as to say in verse 15, "According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep."

Again, notice how Paul is, himself, in anticipation of the Lord's possible return even in his own lifetime. "... we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord."

It's interesting too, how Paul drives home his point and how this must have been a comfort to the Thessalonians, when he derives the authority for this information, not from himself, but from the Lord God. "According to the Lord's own word."

What words of the Lord could Paul be referring to? Well, we know that our Lord Jesus did speak concerning His second coming. We see this in the Gospel of Matthew when Jesus was asked by His disciples about this event.

MAT 24:3 "As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

Our Lord went on to give a description of this event in the 24th chapter of Matthew. He spoke of events leading up to the second coming such as wars and rumors of wars; nation rising against nation; kingdoms against kingdoms, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.

Someone might well say, 'these things have been going on for years', and you'd be right. However, Jesus simply gave these signs not as the final evidence for the second coming but rather as merely beginning signs of the last days. He says in MAT 24:8 "All these are the beginning of birth pains."

In fact, He goes on to explain how these birth pains will increase with Christians being persecuted and killed on account of Christ. Many false prophets will arise and mislead many. Lawlessness will increase and most people's love will grow cold.

Again, this has been going on for years and has certainly escalated during our lifetime. But is this the end? Well, as you read through Matthew 24 it almost seems as though two different events are being described, both surrounding the second coming of Christ. On the one hand there seems to be terrible persecution going on that goes beyond anything imagined. It's not just localized, it's worldwide.

We read in MAT 24:21-22 "For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now - and never to be equaled again. 22 If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened."

This obviously is not some event that has happened in the past, but is future. There has been persecution throughout the world on God's people, but not the kind of persecution which could be classified "unequaled from the beginning of the world until now - and never to be equaled again."

All of these signs are leading up to the second coming of Christ. But there's more as we see in MAT 24:29 "Immediately after the distress of those days "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'" (Isaiah 13:10; 34:4)

This description is cataclysmic in nature and it will not be a local event but one which is worldwide. People's lives will be turned upside down. There will be no normalcy in the earth. Everyone's attention will be on the heavens and everyone will be expecting something. And yet we would go too far to limit this description to natural disasters, even on a global scale.

We know that the sun and the moon will not cease to give its light, or that the stars will fall from the sky to the earth. And though you could make the case that this language is simply designed to be hyperbole as it implies great and marvelous wonders happening in the earth in those days, we must not forget that the greatest tragedy in those days is still associated with the abomination of desolation that Jesus speaks of in Matthew 24.

That abomination, as will be seen, is the man of lawlessness setting himself up in the temple of God and declaring himself to be above God. The man is not one man but one mankind that has refused to bow the knee to Christ and has deceived its way into the church to mock and destroy that which is holy. And it will be this sign of the

church becoming a harlot where Christ will finally come to rescue His people, His true church out of the harlot that will have the name "church" in those days.

MAT 24:30-31 "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. 31 And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other."

Make no mistake, every eye will see. The whole world will be made aware of Christ's coming. It will be public and spectacular. And yet, in this same chapter of Matthew there seems to be an entirely different description of Christ's coming which is not public and certainly not spectacular in the sense that "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken."

MAT 24:37-41 "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; 39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left."

How can this be? How can, on the one hand, people be thrown into chaos as the world apparently has the kind of embroiled convulsion of events which grab everyone's attention and alarms everyone that an awesome episode is on its way, and yet on the other hand is the kind of event that no one is alarmed over and are expecting nothing out of the ordinary?

In fact, as Jesus puts it, in those days everyone will be conducting business as usual, just as in the days of Noah where they anticipated nothing extraordinary. The flood took all of those people by surprise. Certainly, they had been warned but they didn't believe it. They thought Noah was a "nut".

And so they continued living as though nothing would happen, until the flood came and they were shocked into reality. This, says Jesus, "is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man."

But, again, I ask the question, how can you have both chaos where everyone is alerted, and normalcy where no one is alarmed?

For many in the church today it is thought that two different and distinct events are being addressed; one secret and quiet, and the other not secret or quiet. According to this thought the quiet event is what has come to be known as the rapture of the church which would soon, (3-4 years), be followed by the global event where Christ returns with the raptured saints to set up a one thousand year earthly kingdom known as the millennial reign of Jesus Christ from the present Jerusalem.

And while this certainly seems reasonable it is not the result of thoughtful exegesis of any of the passages that address the coming of the Son of man.

Let's revisit our text and use that as our springboard into this subject of the rapture of Christ's church, which there will most certainly be, and the coming of our Lord to this earth, which will most certainly happen. The question, however is, how are these two events connected and do they happen separately or at the same time?

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

As noted earlier, Paul gives this word as an exhortation by the word of the Lord. And we know what word of the Lord Paul is speaking of here as he is referencing what Jesus already spoke concerning the end of the age in the gospel of Matthew.

You'll remember that in Matthew 23 Jesus spends most of that time declaring "woes" upon the Pharisees and scribes as they have led the people astray from the things of God by taking advantage of the people.

Matthew 23:13 ¹³ "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from

people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

After pronouncing a number of woes upon the scribes and Pharisees Jesus ends by saying this as He references when these woes will come upon them.

Matthew 23:31-39 ³¹ "So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. ³² "Fill up, then, the measure *of the guilt* of your fathers. ³³ "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell? ³⁴ "Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, ³⁵ so that upon you may fall *the guilt of* all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. ³⁶ "Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. ³⁷ "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. ³⁸ "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! ³⁹ "For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

The woes, according to verse 32, end in the sentence of hell upon these leaders, and then Jesus puts the time frame into perspective by saying that you will not see Me until you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

What is Jesus saying here? He is saying that there will be a time in which the Christ will be taken away. By the way, this is interesting language that speaks of a particular event in the future and it is tied to the coming of the Messiah who comes to rule and reign over His people.

The Jews knew of this time but they associated it with a kingdom of this world, of which Christ will testify is not a kingdom that He will rule over as He will tell Pilate not many days from what we read in Matthew 23, "My kingdom is not of this world."

How do we know that the Jews were tying the words, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord," with the rule of the Messiah? We need only go back to Matthew 21.

^{NAU} **Matthew 21:9** The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David; BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Hosanna in the highest!"

The Jews knew that the Son of David was a reference to the Messiah who would come from David and who would sit on David's throne forever.

In fact, this is precisely the language Matthew uses to start his gospel.

Matthew 1:1 ^{NAU} The record of the genealogy of *Jesus the Messiah, the son of David*, the son of Abraham:

Of course, the prophet Isaiah had already addressed this truth in that famous pronouncement of the coming of our Messiah into this world.

Isaiah 9:6-7 ⁶ For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ *There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore.* The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

This is a reference to an eternal kingdom over which the Messiah will reign, not for a thousand years, but forevermore.

This is the eternal kingdom spoken of by Jesus Christ throughout His earthly ministry that many Jews confused with a kingdom belonging to this present world when, during what came to be known as the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, they threw palm branches before the Lord and declared, "BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!"

Right message. Wrong time. The time will be future as Jesus makes clear to the Pharisees and scribes when He says, ' you will not see Me until you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

When will that be? Well, that's what the disciples wanted to know as well, and in Matthew 24 we get the answer.

Now, again, don't lose me here because all that we see in Matthew 24 is directly tied to the same time frame in our text which says, ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. (**1 Thessalonians 4:15**)

The coming of the Lord is the issue and the coming of the Lord was always the issue with the disciples who, you'll remember, were told by the angel at the ascension of Jesus Christ, ¹¹ "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." (**Acts 1:11**)

This coming in Acts 11 is the same coming in our text. It is implied that just as Jesus was taken up bodily into heaven, He will return bodily from heaven. But when He returns He will do a number of things and one of those things is what the disciples were interested in in light of the context of the return of the Messiah to set up and rule the world on the eternal throne of David.

And so, in Matthew they pose the question to Jesus.

Matthew 24:3 ³ As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

Note carefully what the disciples were asking of Jesus. They wanted to know of those things happening that are associated with the coming of Christ and the end of the age. In other words, they understood that when the Christ comes it will come at the end of the age, which is another way of saying, the end of the world in judgment.

Every Jew understood this language and Jesus utilized this language earlier in the gospel of Matthew.

^{NAU} **Matthew 16:27** "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.

What Jesus is referring to here is what is known as The Day of the Lord, and it will be a day of judgment of the entire world. The Old Testament has many references to this particular day.

Isaiah 13:9-11 ⁹ Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it. ¹⁰ For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises And the moon will not shed its light. ¹¹ Thus I will punish the world for its evil And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.

If this language sounds familiar it is because Jesus utilizes this very language when describing the coming of the Son of Man.

Matthew 24:29-30 ²⁹ "But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.

All of this was foretold by the prophets and Jesus acknowledges that He is the fulfillment of all that is spoken of concerning the judgment of the world in that final day, the day known as the Day of the Lord.

Joel 3:13-16 ¹³ Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great. ¹⁴ Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. ¹⁵ The sun and moon grow dark And the stars lose their brightness. ¹⁶ The LORD roars from Zion And utters His voice from Jerusalem, And the heavens and the earth tremble. But the LORD is a refuge for His people And a stronghold to the sons of Israel.

Zephaniah 1:14-18 ¹⁴ Near is the great day of the LORD, Near and coming very quickly; Listen, the day of the LORD! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. ¹⁵ A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness, ¹⁶ A day of trumpet and battle cry Against the fortified cities And the high corner towers. ¹⁷ I will bring distress on men So that they will walk like the blind, Because they have sinned against the LORD; And their blood will be poured out like dust And their flesh like dung. ¹⁸ Neither their silver nor their gold Will be able to deliver them On the day of the LORD'S wrath; And all the earth will be

devoured In the fire of His jealousy, For He will make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, Of all the inhabitants of the earth.

“The Day of the Lord” is “The coming of the Lord” in our text of 1Thessalonians as it is also in Matthew 24. And it is this coming that the disciples were interested in because they knew that when the Messiah comes He will come in judgment as He will then establish His kingdom forever. And we know that this Messiah has been given all authority to judge all men.

^{NAU} **Acts 17:31** because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

To suggest that this “Coming” is anything other than what Scripture claims it to be, that of final judgment, is simply to miss the mark of sound hermeneutics, by suggesting that it is a secret coming as in the rapture prior to judgment.

The disciples knew what they were asking when they approached Jesus about His coming and the end of the age and Jesus knew what they were asking and answered appropriately by speaking of this judgment.

Matthew 24:4-6 ⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. ⁵ "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. ⁶ "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for *those things* must take place, but *that* is not yet the end.

The end of what? The end of the age that Jesus characterizes with calamity, including wars, rumors of wars, and then Jesus lists a number of other signs including nation rising against nation, famine, earthquakes and the like, but He says these things are just birth pains.

In other words, these will be common place but are only the very beginnings of the real signs that will alert you to the end. But then Jesus turns His attention to the things that will usher in the beginning of the end.

Matthew 24:9-16 ⁹ "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. ¹⁰ "At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹ "Many false prophets will arise

and will mislead many. ¹² "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. ¹³ "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. ¹⁴ "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come. ¹⁵ "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), ¹⁶ then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.

What's interesting about this description of the end of the age is that Jesus speaks of a falling away as they betray one another.

What is this a reference to? Well, interestingly enough, in a similar context to our text in 1Thessalonians, Paul elaborates on the coming of the Lord in his second letter to the Thessalonians and juxtaposes that with another event that must first take place before Christ returns.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 ^{NAU} Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ² that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³ Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

What apostasy is Paul speaking of? The same apostasy that Jesus refers to in Mat.24:10 where He makes reference to many falling away, which is what an apostasy is.

It is a turning away from the faith of Jesus Christ. It is a denial of the one true gospel delivered to the saints according to the word of God. So, what Jesus is saying and what Paul is saying is that regarding the coming of Christ, which is the Day of the Lord, something must first happen that will be a sign to Christ's soon return.

And that is the apostasy of the "church" of Jesus Christ. Well, how is that possible since we are told by Jesus Himself ¹⁸ "... upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. (**Matthew 16:18**)

The gates of Hades will not overpower Christ's church, but the apostasy will be allowed by Christ to distinguish the true church from the false.

There is an outward appearance of the church that we see all over the world, what is commonly called the visible church. But everyone knows that simply surrounding yourself with the four walls of a church or an organization called the church does not make it the true church.

The true church, that is a true believer, is one who is regenerated by the Holy Spirit and has embraced, by faith alone, the gift of God found in Christ alone. Ultimately, only God knows the hearts of those who belong to Him, thus this church is regarded as the "invisible" church, because it is ultimately only visible to the eyes of God.

Jesus and Paul are telling us to look for the apostasy of the church to happen before the return of Christ. The apostasy will be characterized by those who not only turn away from the faith but speak out against Christ and set themselves up as above Christ by their very actions; what Paul calls the man of lawlessness.

This is what Paul is speaking of in his second letter to the Thessalonians.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 ³ Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

The man of lawlessness is not limited to any one individual any more than the anti christ is limited to only one person. In fact, John makes the case that the one who goes out from the body of Christ, which was a reference to an apostasy, is an antichrist.

1 John 2:18-19 ¹⁸ Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

1 John 2:22 ²² Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

Those who went out apostasized and proved themselves never to have been true Christians. And notice too, that John places this type of thing in the context of the last hour. We've been living in the last hour for some time now, but we are some 2,000 years closer to that last hour coming to a close.

And the closing of the last hour establishes that Jesus is knocking at the door.

But, when we speak of the apostasy we are also speaking of what Jesus refers to as the abomination of desolation that Daniel prophesied. What in the world is that? It is those in the church who have usurped the authority and power that only belongs to God, as they set themselves above God.

Despite the fact that the book of Daniel uses language that addresses Israel and the sacrifices, Jesus is dealing with future implications regarding the church, not national Israel, as we see throughout the New Testament where there is only one people of God, the Israel of God of whom Paul speaks when writing to the Galatians.

Galatians 6:15-16 ¹⁵ For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. ¹⁶ And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

And so, when Jesus speaks of the abomination of desolation He is referring to the temple of God in a New Covenant setting. And we know what that temple of God is.

John 2:18-21 ¹⁸ The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?" ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰ The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" ²¹ But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

So, how does the abomination of desolation fit in with the body of Jesus Christ?

We know that in three days that body was raised victoriously and gloriously from the grave defeating sin and death. But we also

know that those who are in Christ by faith alone share in that resurrection life and therefore are identified with that temple in an intimate way.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 ¹⁶ Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷ If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

Paul uses identical language in his second letter to the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 6:16-17 ¹⁶ Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE." ¹⁷ "Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord. "AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you.

Often times we will use this second letter and the context of this passage to urge Christians not to be bound to unbelievers in marriage or business dealings. And while we may certainly agree with warnings against such arrangements it can also be argued that we should not be bound with an organization, (a form of the "church"), that has a form of godliness but denies the power thereof of the true Messiah.

In other words, when the time comes and the apostasy of the church begins to rear its ugly head and the unbeliever takes up primary residence in the halls of what we call the church, resulting in the abomination of desolation, as they mock and smear the true sacrifice for sin, Jesus Christ, then it is time to flee and not be bound with such organizations.

2 Corinthians 6:14-15 ¹⁴ Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵ Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

If we relegate the abomination of desolation to the rise of a rebuilt Jewish temple with daily sacrifices then we miss the most important aspect of Christ's revelation and that is that He came to fulfill the law and abolish the old covenant in favor of the new covenant in His blood.

Galatians 3:24-29 ²⁴ Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. ²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

We are no longer under a tutor, therefore we are no longer under the law, therefore the old covenant and everything associated with it; the temple, the sacrifices, the Aaronic priesthood, the new moons, the Sabbaths, the dietary laws, everything that was designed by God to be a shadow of the true sacrifice, will never be reestablished because it all pointed to Christ and He fulfilled it all.

To reestablish any form of the old covenant is a slap in the face to the finished work of Christ and that is an abomination that should not be tolerated. Nor should we tolerate the abomination by declaring that God is less than God when He speaks the truth. And this is what many in the “church” are doing today.

They know better than God when they bow the knee to science and conclude that God did not mean that He created the world in six literal days, because everyone knows that “science” proves otherwise. How dare we read into those plain words of God and eisegete those passages to be twisted into a meaning that was never intended by the Creator of heaven and earth.

How dare the seminaries around the world teach and promote a gospel that waters down the shed blood of Christ, or how they deny the miraculous works of Christ and still promote themselves as leading institutions of truth when they are full of dead men’s bones.

The abomination of desolation is in full swing and it is only a matter of time before true Christians in the western world will not be welcomed in Christ’s church and it will be dangerous to be a born again believer in this world. And this brings us full circle to the description of the sun and moon not giving its light and the stars falling from the heavens to the earth.

Part of this language is describing the spiritual condition of the world and the church in those days where the light of the gospel will be hidden and the calamity that comes upon mankind will be

spiritual in those days when the serpent of old will be released for a time to deceive the nations once again as he did in days gone by prior to the Messiah coming into this world some 2,000 years ago.

And people will believe a lie and the deception will be so great that God will cut those days short for the sake of the elect.

Matthew 24:21-25 ²¹ "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. ²² "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. ²³ "Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There *He is*,' do not believe *him*. ²⁴ "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ "Behold, I have told you in advance.

Back to our text. So, where was I? Oh yeah.

1 Thessalonians 4:15 ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

The coming of the Lord is nothing short of the Day of the Lord, the last trumpet that Paul alludes to in our text in verse 16 that we'll look at next week. I know we didn't get very far today in our text, but I think you can see that it was important that we set the proper stage upon which to make the biblical case that when we begin to delve deeper into "we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord" that we must understand when and what this coming of the Lord is, because it will greatly determine the true meaning of the text.

But as we'll see next time it will also give us a true sense of comfort and joy as we consider the plan Jesus Christ has for establishing His throne on the new earth in the new Jerusalem on the eternal throne of David.

It will all make sense and help us to distinguish between that which is fanciful theology and theology built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles as we consider the whole counsel of God's word on this subject of the last days and our place and purpose for these last days.

Next week we will consider the resurrection that Paul speaks of in the closing verses of chapter 4, but we will also see when this resurrection actually takes place and what other events are

associated with this event. And we will see that there will be a rapture of the church but it will happen simultaneously with the general resurrection of all.

And as we close this section next week it will really help us to understand why we will be able to embrace Paul's words to the church.

1 Thessalonians 4:18 ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.