Today, we'll do something a little different. It is resurrection Sunday, and so I thought I would give you a detailed analysis of the events leading up to, at, and after the rapture. The main verses we will look at will be from 2 Thessalonians 2, so you might want to have those verses opened when we get to them.

Before I give the main body of what I have to say, I will first explain some misconceptions or misanalyses concerning the rapture:

1. Jesus never spoke of the rapture. As such
2. Nothing in Matthew 24 is referring to the rapture.
3. Jesus' words of the synoptic gospels, prior to the resurrection, were spoken to Israel, under the law, and in anticipation of the millennial reign.
4. Hence, the words, "But of that day and hour no one knows" are not speaking of the rapture.
5. As such, any rapture commentary that brings in the three synoptic gospels is already wrong. You can (and should) ignore that commentary and go watch or read something else.

This is because:

1. The rapture is what is known as a "mystery."
2. The rapture, the mystery, was revealed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15. As this is so, then it had never been revealed before. That was about 30 years after Christ's ascension.
3. Being a mystery revealed, it is no longer a mystery.
4. Paul revealed it, he explains it, and he gives the timeline for it. There is no need to go anywhere else to determine the timeline, even if it is alluded to elsewhere.
5. The actual dating of end-times events, such as the rapture, is not given, nor can it be deduced. This can be determined from Acts 1:7 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1. Therefore, anyone predicting the date of the rapture is doing it in defiance of Scripture and what he is claiming is, by default, false. As such, you can ignore what is said and go watch or read something else.

Now, I'll give you some preliminary evidence of what is coming:

How long is the peace deal with Israel set to be? Seven years. That is explicitly stated in Daniel 9:24-27. Israel wss given seventy periods of seventy years, sixty-nine have been fulfilled, and one more is yet ahead.

Who is it that confirms this covenant with Israel? Yes, the Antichrist. He is known there as "the prince who is to come."

He is the same person who will "bring an end to sacrifice and offering," as Daniel says, at the mid-point, meaning the "middle of the week." That is all clear and explicit –

"Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week;
But in the middle of the week
He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering." Daniel 9:27

Ok, so the seven-year covenant is confirmed by the Antichrist. But that... that won't happen until after what? Until after the restrainer is removed – meaning the rapture. This will be carefully detailed as we go on.

*A note before preceding – nothing of Revelation 4:2-19:10 refers to the church. The words are directed to Israel as they parallel Jesus' words in the synoptic gospel prophecies. Looking to justify a mid- or post-tribulation rapture from there does not work because the words are not written about the church. You have mixed dispensations. As such, any rapture commentary that brings in a commentary from those verses is wrong. You can ignore what is said and go watch or read something else.

As for the rapture itself, Paul (who introduced the mystery, and who explains it to us) begins his words concerning the rapture in 1 Corinthians 15 where it speaks of the resurrection, also detailing the rapture, explaining what will happen to the body we have and what will come next and why. 20-23 (resurrection) / 35-49 (type of body) / 50-53 (how the event will occur) –

"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— **52** in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52
Next, Paul gives the order of rapture events in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 –

"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 by no means precede those who are asleep. **16** For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. **17** Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. **18** Therefore comfort one another with these words."

In 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3, he notes the times and seasons, repeating them from Jesus' words of Acts 1:6, 7 –

"But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. **2** For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night."

In 1 Thessalonians 5:4, 5, he says that we – meaning the church – are not in darkness, we are sons of the light – this is an obvious pretribulation inference. If the Day of the Lord – the Tribulation – is darkness, and we are sons of the light, then we are not to be found in darkness. It speaks directly to a pretribulation rapture –

"But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. **5** You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness." 1 Thessalonians 5:4, 5

After this, 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 refers to the tribulation coming upon the world. And then after that, 2 Thessalonians 2 gives the timeline for what will occur as laid out now –

2:1 - **Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,** This is an issue which he has already addressed in his first letter to those at Thessalonica, especially in Chapter 4 of it. Therefore, his words are to be taken along with what he said there. Without getting too far ahead, it is evident from his coming words that people were making false claims about the events of 1 Thessalonians 4, and these statements were troubling the fellowship. Paul wants them (and thus us!) to know the proper sequence of events that will occur in and around the Lord's coming "and our gathering together to Him."

The word Paul uses, translated as "gathering," is found only here and in Hebrews 10:25 where it is in regard to Christians assembling together for worship and instruction. In this case, it must be referring to all who are in Christ, both the dead and the living. The words of 1 Thessalonians 4 are being further explained. Therefore, it is certainly referring to the time of the rapture at the Lord's coming for His church.

2:2 - **not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.** First, he says that those in Thessalonica are "not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled." This is based on what he said in verse 1 about the rapture. He is asking them to be sound in their doctrine, and thus they will not be led astray in their minds. Their hope will remain steadfast, and their faith will not be weakened.

He then says that this should be the case if presented with a false claim "either by spirit or by word or by letter." The reason why it is false lies yet ahead in Paul's words, but if a claim is made which contradicts the word of the Lord, then it is false.

Such a claim could be "by spirit." This would be a supposed "prophetic utterance" by someone in a Christian setting. It would be a claim to divine revelation. Today we have the word of God. We do not need, nor will we receive, such a word of "prophetic utterance" concerning the rapture. Any claim of such a prophecy is to be rejected, and the supposed recipient is to be disregarded as a lunatic.

Next, Paul says, "by word or by letter." If a supposed letter or writing is received which contradicts what Paul will say, then it should be tossed into the garbage can, soaked with gas, and lit on fire. Be careful to not burn down your house in the process! Gas is, after all, very volatile.

With this thought of the importance of what he will now say out of the way, he finishes the verse with, "as though the day of Christ had come." <u>The focus here is on the day of Christ</u>. This is the main thought of Paul's words in this section. The "coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering to Him" is being set in relation to "the day of Christ," not the other way around. If one does not properly follow this thought, then there will be confusion in end-times theology. When is the rapture? When is the anti-Christ revealed? These things have to be taken in connection with what is now said by Paul. Otherwise, incorrect analysis of the timing of these events is inevitable. This is why Paul has specifically started with the rapture, and then set it in relation to "the day of Christ."

What is “the day of Christ’ then? It needs to be understood that various manuscripts say, “day of the Lord” and “day of Christ.” They both have the same meaning. Christ.is.the.Lord. This is speaking of the 7 years of tribulation which are coming upon the world. It is not merely the last 3 ½ years of this period. These seven years are what are spoken of in Daniel 9:24-27. The details of these seven years are given in numerous places in the Old Testament, and they are described in greater detail in Revelation 4:2 – 19:10. This is what Paul is referring to now.

2:3 - **Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,** The opening clause of this verse, “Let no one deceive you by any means,” is based on what was said in the previous verse. They were “not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us.”

At that early day in church history, there were deceivers who were making crazy stuff up out of their own heads and passing it off as prophecies from the Lord. Paul is showing those at Thessalonica (and thus us!) that only the instructions of true apostles were to be regarded as authoritative. Now that the apostolic age is over, our only source for divine revelation is the word of God. Any supposed word from the Lord, or any supposed divine instruction apart from the Bible, is to be wholly rejected.

Paul’s next words have a thought inserted in them by the translators, “for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first.” The Greek simply reads, “because if not shall have come the apostasy.” However, the words which were inserted by the translators are rightly supplied. It is speaking not of the rapture of verse 1, but of the “day of Christ” (or day of the Lord) of verse 2. The day of Christ (meaning the tribulation period) will not come “unless the falling away comes first.”

It has become common to teach that this word, *apostasia*, or “falling away,” is actually speaking about the rapture because the word signifies “leave” or “depart.” However, this is an unnecessary stretch of the intent of his words. The word is only used elsewhere in Acts 21:21 when speaking of forsaking Moses, meaning the Law of Moses. The departure is one of purposeful turning away from set doctrine.

There will be a falling away from the true faith of Christ before the day of Christ comes upon the world. What is implied here is that the true church will be gone by then, but that will be explained in verse 7. It is not explained by the word *apostasia* in this verse. Along with this thought, Paul finishes the verse with, “and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition.”

Here he speaks of “the man of sin.” The term is unique in the NT. It is applied to a specific person who will be a man of lawlessness, as the word *anomia* implies. The word signifies “the utter disregard for God’s law (His written and living Word).” Paul further describes him as “the son of perdition.” This is a term used only one other time in the Bible, in John 17:12, when speaking of Judas who betrayed Jesus.

Judas, in essence, “fell away” from the truth of the apostolic office which otherwise could have been his. He chose the evil path, and he was essentially born to be destroyed. Like Judas, this

person will be set on a course that can only lead to ruin. The word Paul uses which is translated as "revealed" is *apokaluptó*. It will be as if a covering is pulled away and this person, bent on disregarding God's law, will be unveiled. He then is a counterfeit to Christ, and thus he is known to us as the Antichrist. What we have so far is the understanding that 1) the day of Christ (the day of the Lord), will not actually commence until the Antichrist is revealed. However, 2) he will not be revealed until after the rapture, as is implied in this verse, but which will be made explicit in verse 7. And so thus far, we see the sequence of events – 1) Rapture of the church; 2) The falling away and the revealing of the Antichrist; 3) Day of Christ (Day of the Lord)

2:4 - **who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.** The words which begin this verse are actually in the present tense. Rightly translated, it says, "...the [one] opposing and exalting himself." If taken substantially, it would read "...the opposer, and exalter of himself." It clearly refers to the Antichrist. The words are reflective of Satan himself but are being applied to a man; and so, it is one who is wholly in league with the goals and intents of Satan. It is this man of lawlessness who places himself "above all that is called God or is worshiped."

In this phrase, it is understood that the Antichrist will place himself above the true God as well as all other false gods. Total allegiance to him will be required. In essence, he will be believed to be the fulfillment of whatever hope is laid out in any religion. For those who say they are Christians, he will appear to be their Christ. For the Jews, he will appear to be their Messiah. For the Muslims, he will appear to be their Mahdi, etc. But he will even exalt himself above the God or gods that he claims he is from, demanding worship of himself only.

There are things that are not "gods" which receive worship or adoration, but he will exalt himself above any such thing. This self-exaltation will be seen in a demand for total allegiance above power, money, or even life itself. This will be fully seen and realized on the day that "he sits as God in the temple of God." These words, for countless years of the church age, have been taken to mean something other than a Jewish temple.

That temple was destroyed, and there seemed no chance of one ever being rebuilt. Some have taken this to mean "the Vatican" where the pope sits. Others argue it is referring to the Christian church in general. Charles Ellicott took it to mean "a poetical or prophetical description of usurping divine prerogatives generally." These and other analyses were based on a misunderstanding that the church had somehow replaced Israel, or that there would never be a "temple of God" in Jerusalem again.

However, it is understood from the dispensational model that the Jews do have another temple coming (Daniel 9:24-27), and that is now possible with Israel back in their land. The temple implements are ready, and the temple itself will be built. This is actually in accord with Revelation 11:1 where John was told to "measure the temple of God." One doesn't measure a universal church or a "poetical or prophetical description," and the Vatican doesn't sit in Jerusalem. Paul's words, combined with those of Daniel and John, clearly indicate a rebuilt Jewish temple in Jerusalem. It is in this temple that the Antichrist will sit "as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

To sit in the temple, where only God is allowed to reside, is to claim the authority and personage of God. No priest is said to sit in the temple. There are duties to be conducted and then they are to depart. No such furniture exists for the priests to sit down on. Only in the Holy of Holies of the temple was there a place of rest. This is where God dwelt above the cherubim on the mercy seat above the ark. The high priest would enter behind that veil once a year to make atonement for the sins of the people, but other than that, there was no sitting of any kind involved in temple duties. (See Hebrews 10:12 & 12:2)

The Antichrist, claiming that he is God, will be his justification that he is entitled to sit there. As it is known that Jesus is God incarnate and the Christ, this then is the "Antichrist." He will make a false claim against the true God who has revealed Himself in the Person of Jesus.

2:5 - **Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?** here Paul takes time to upbraid the church at Thessalonica, and he does it in the form of a question. Further, in a change unique to this verse alone, he switches from the third person to the first person. Whereas he has been saying "we" to include those with him, he now departs from that in his zeal to correct his audience and says, "I."

He begins with, "Do you not remember." It is a way of saying, "You obviously didn't pay attention." Jesus used this same type of questioning in order to rebuke the disciples. Paul has done it elsewhere as well, such as in his letters to the Romans and those at Corinth. Now, having chided them for not having remembered, and for instead having become shaken by someone's introduction of false doctrine (see verse 2), he goes on to say, "that when I was still with you."

As noted, he speaks here in the first person – "I personally was there, and I personally instructed you on this matter." Paul's frustration is obvious. He wanted soundness of mind for his beloved brethren, but they had instead been disturbed in their thinking because of the introduction of incorrect information.

To finish the verse, he says, "I told you these things." The word translated as "told" in the Greek is in the imperfect tense. In other words, "I repeatedly told you these things." The use of the imperfect, when read by the church, would be an embarrassing moment for them. Paul had spoken of the end times as a core part of his doctrine, and one of the things he told them was that it would probably be a long time before the Lord returned. Further, before "the day of Christ" came, certain things would precede it.

If they had paid attention, they would not now be unsettled. There are things that people hear, and of which they should pay close attention, but they instead take brain naps while the instructor is imparting his wisdom to them. In this, they are only harming themselves.

2:6 - **And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.** Paul continues with his thoughts on the revealing of the Antichrist. He said that the Antichrist would not be revealed until after the rapture of the church. This is implied in the previous verses, and it will be implied again in the coming verses. Only then will Antichrist be revealed, and the world enters the day of Christ (the Lord). But something is restraining that from occurring, something

they have already been told about. This is reminded to them with the words, “And now you know what is restraining.”

The words, “And now” are not speaking of anything he has said in this letter. Instead of being in a temporal sense, the word “now” is being used in an introductory sense. They are being asked to call to memory what had already been told to them. The reason for explaining it this way is because the church had been fooled; they had been misdirected by false information claiming that “the day of Christ” had come. The reminder now is that the revealing of the Antichrist is actually purposefully hindered, and it would continue to be so until the right time arrived.

The words, “what is restraining” are insufficient here. There is a definite article in front of “restraining” in the Greek. This is not a mere doctrine that they are aware of, but rather of a specific and familiar object. It should say, “that which is restraining.” A known entity is restraining the coming of Antichrist, and the time for that entity to cease restraining will come as planned by God. And so, there was absolutely no reason for those in Thessalonica (and thus us!) to speculate about having already entered into the tribulation period.

The truth holds for us even until this day. And yet, how many have claimed that the day of Christ (the day of the Lord) has arrived? How many speculations about the tribulation period have been laid out in chart upon chart! But there is One restraining, and that will continue to be the case so “that he may be revealed in his own time.” The “he” is speaking of Antichrist.

What is restraining the revealing of the Antichrist is not specifically mentioned, but it can be readily inferred based on several things in the verses to come. But suffice it to say that 1) the Antichrist is one who stands in opposition to Jesus. If this must be restrained for even 2000 years now, it shows that even though Antichrist is a person, there is more involved. He is a person who will be specifically filled by Satan. And 2) if this could be at any given time, then there is a set time – known even 2000 years ago – when this would come about. What could restrain Satan from so filling whatever person he chose for that long? Stay tuned.

The words, “that he might be revealed in his own time,” have the meaning of “with a view to.” What this means is that God’s purposes will come about because the power of Antichrist will stop being restrained when He sees fit. Just as God ordained Israel to be exiled to Babylon for 70 years, and then that exile ended as prophesied, and then just as the same is true with the ending of their second exile at a pre-prophesied moment to effect His purposes, the ending of the restraint of the power which will be given to the Antichrist is intended to meet God’s purposes for judgment on the unrepentant world.

The word translated as “time” indicates a set and purposeful time. It is a particular season. Just as Christ Jesus was said to have come in the fullness of the time set by God, so Antichrist will come at a particular season to fulfill God’s purposes.

2:7 - **For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way.** The word “For” is given based on the words of the previous verse. Paul said something was restraining the Antichrist. This was “that he may be revealed in his own time.” From this, Paul continues with “For the mystery of lawlessness is

already at work." A mystery is something not revealed. There is a lawlessness that is working (and it has been working for 2000 years or more) that is not yet fully revealed. It has been slowly working out a plan. In the Greek, there is an article in front of both "mystery" and "lawlessness." It reads, "For **the** mystery of **the** lawlessness."

The state of lawlessness which is still not fully revealed is "already at work." The idea of the work is that of an inward action as if yeast causing bread to swell. It is an infection, not a personal thing. It is a state of lawlessness which is working, and which will eventually be revealed. This mystery is then sharply contrasted with the word "revealed" which is found in verses 6 & 8. There is a time when the lawlessness will come forth to effect its purposes on earth. It will be when the Antichrist is revealed because he will then embody this lawlessness. This working of lawlessness, however, is kept in check until the appropriate time.

At some point, the restraining force of verse 6 will no longer restrain. As it says, "only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way." Here, the words "will do so" are supplied by the translators for clarity. The use of the masculine word "He" is based upon the masculine, singular article in the Greek. In verse 6, the restraining force was described with a neuter article, "that which restrains." That is converted now to a masculine noun. The question is, "Who is He?"

The NKJV capitalizes the word. This is a presupposition that it is speaking of the Holy Spirit. Others translate this as "the one," "he" (not capitalized), "that which," "the person," etc. Each translation is based on a best guess of the nature of this "restrainer." But Paul uses the masculine here for a reason, and so it is not appropriate to continue to translate it in the neuter. Further, this cannot be a "person" in the regular sense. The restraining has gone on for millennia. It is also not something belonging to <u>the lawlessness</u>. To be restrained is an external force, not an internal one.

Therefore, the NKJV is correct. God is restraining. However, and more specifically, it is the restraining power of the third member of the Godhead – the Holy Spirit. One analysis is that the restrainer is the church itself, but as the word is masculine, it is more appropriately the One who is intimately identified with the true church. The Holy Spirit is given to all who believe in Christ (Ephesians 1:13, 14). As this is so, the church is involved in the restraining process, but it is the Holy Spirit who is the one who actively restrains the lawlessness. And He will do so "until He is taken out of the way."

What this means is that there is a time when the Holy Spirit's restraining influence will no longer be effected. A releasing of the restraint will come about, and only then will the lawless one be revealed. What is certain then is that if the Holy Spirit is taken out of the way, the church too must be taken out of the way. If the effect of the Holy Spirit is to end, and the church were to remain, then the "guarantee" of the sealing of the Spirit which Paul notes in Ephesians 1:14 would not be a sound "guarantee." We would be left abandoned. This is completely contrary to the nature of God and His word. Thus, this taking "out of the way" of the Holy Spirit is simultaneous with the taking away of the church at the rapture. Both occur, and only then will the mystery of lawlessness (and thus the Antichrist) be revealed. This is explicitly stated next...

2:8 - **And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.** "And then." In Greek it is *kai tote*. It is correctly translated… "And then." So here we have a clear sequence of events –

1) The Restrainer (meaning the Holy Spirit, and thus the body of believers whom the Holy Spirit has sealed) will be "taken out of the way." 2) And then the lawless one will be revealed, which will be in conjunction with… 3) The tribulation period (the day of Christ/the Lord).

The timeline is set. There is no reason at all to debate who the Antichrist is, and there is no need to wonder if Christians will have to endure some (mid) or all (post) of the tribulation period. Paul is the one to define these things. Going to the words of Jesus in the synoptic gospels to determine the timing of these events is inappropriate because Jesus is not speaking to the church about these things. He is speaking to Israel about things that will affect them, including the tribulation period.

In using the words of the gospels to form a prophetic timeline for the church, one mixes dispensations. In doing so, a convoluted theology will always result. We are to stick to the epistles for proper church-age doctrine, and it is Paul who reveals, speaks of, and provides the timing for the rapture. It is only after the removal of the Restrainer that "the lawless one will be revealed." It is this Satan-filled person "whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth."

1 Thessalonians 2:9-12 will give details about the time after the rapture and what it will be like for those left behind.

1 Thessalonians 3:6-12 sums up Paul's thoughts concerning rapture date setters who fritter away their time instead of remaining productive people of God. Verse 10 is how they should be treated. **For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.**

Stop trying to predict the rapture. We have the timeline of the events, and that is all we are going to receive until the moment it happens.

In Summary: Not a single word of the three synoptic gospels is spoken to the church about the rapture. Matt 24:36 is spoken to Israel, while under the law. It has nothing to do with the rapture. The rapture was a "mystery" revealed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:51. This was the first time it is ever directly and explicitly addressed in human history. That was about 30 years after Christ's ascension. Revelation 1-3 are addressed to the church. Revelation 4:1 is the rapture. The church is not mentioned at all from 4:2 until 19:10. In 19:11 is the return of Christ. Rev 19:14 notes that we are there with Him in this return.

Pictures of a pretribulation rapture are carefully recorded in the Old Testament. If you want to see them, email me for the sermon link.

Finally, the rapture is something that will only happen to those who are in Christ. If you have not called on Jesus, you will not be going. Call on Jesus.

Such is the world in which we live… From Sarasota, Florida to UB Mongolia, I'm Charlie Garrett, this is the Superior Word, and that's your CG Prophecy Report for the Week