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## Revelation

### Chapter 17 - Revealing that Which Allures Men The Mystery of Savage Enticement (vs. 7-12)

**Revelation 17:7:12:** And the angel said to me, “Why do you wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come. Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while. The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is

one of the seven, and he goes to destruction. The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour.

It's sort of self-explanatory, so we can just go on to the next passage. The imagery of Revelation is graphic, to say the least. And if you understand the reason for the imagery, then you understand the Book of Revelation. But if you don't understand the purpose of it, then you get lost in it. The point of the graphic imagery is that it's causing us to feel deeply about something. So that if in fact your desire for the church, and we understand that the Book of Revelation is written to the church; specifically, He starts off writing to the seven churches at Asia Minor, and he lists those seven churches. But we know at large to the church that is, that He's moving

within their hearts to cry out at the end, “Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly!” In order for that to happen, in order for the longing to be a part of the church and the focus of the church to be for Christ, you have to see the world for what it is. So, He begins to show in very detailed ways the sin and a picture of what it looks like in all of its glory, so to speak. So, when you see the great harlot, you realize how terrible it is that she's drinking the blood of the saints. And you go, “Who is this? Who is this woman?” He goes, “It's the cities. It's your cities.” It's the people of the earth that are clamoring for their own selfish indulgence and by virtue of this, longing to have righteousness dead. He said, “It's you.” And the very things that we find ourselves being allured to, hopefully as we go through the Book of Revelation, we find ourselves disdaining and feeling like, “I'm repulsed by this.” If you're feeling that way, then it's working. If you're not, then you're not understanding the picture. Because if you can read some

of these and see these pictures and not be moved in your heart, then there's something wrong with your heart.

But what the church should be doing is not trying to be like the world, it should be repulsing the world. And it should be very unique and very different. So that, as we've quoted over and over again, but we can't quote it enough, you don't love the world; you don't love the things in the world. If you do that, then the love of the Father is not in you. And you can just see the destruction that as He lists the seven churches, many of them were battling with things that were a part of the world and they were allowing those things to come into the church. And He goes, "You've got to get them out." There is a kind of complacency that happens when it's just a part of our way of life. So, you come into church, and you go, "Well, that's just the way things are." And God says, "You don't want them in the church. Get them out of the church. The thing that the church should be is holy. It should be different. It should not be anything like the world." "Well, you know,

we come to church. It's just about money, right? It's no big deal. It's just about money.” It can't be about money. It can't be about building projects. It can't be about business. It can't be about making you feel good. Sorry. It can't be about those kinds of things because if you go down those roads, you begin to realize how destructive it is and you go, “Well, I don't really see it as a problem.” God says, “Okay, let me show you a picture of what it looks like.” So, that's where we are at this point. And He's beginning to describe the pictures. Now, once again, we know this is a book that uses the word “*apokaluptós*” or unveiling or revealing, so we know that He's not trying to hide stuff from us. And yet we're dealing with some issues here that we're going, “Whoa, it's a little confusing to me.” But the point is that if you're really longing for truth, God's going to show it to you. And it really is in the longing that we begin to see the truth.

Now, once again, you have to couple this with the fact that He states ultimately in Revelation 19, when Christ

comes, that all prophecy is to be discerned in light of Jesus Christ. So, if you're reading this and you're not putting Christ in this, then you're not understanding what the text is about. So, we constantly interject that, and we constantly keep bringing the focus back to "This is for the church." Some people read the book and they go, "I'm going to read Revelation to see what happens." Well, that's nice. I can tell you what happened. We win. Not a whole lot of detail has to come in besides that. But the purpose of the book, once again, is to stir our emotions towards Christ.

We come into Chapter 17, and we see the immorality of this harlot, and which is going to be described more specifically in Revelation 18, but is defined in verse 5.

It states this,

(Revelation 17:5) "and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER

OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.””

If you look at the end, once again as a reminder, it says in verse 18, which Scripture is not trying to hide what these things mean,

(Revelation 17:18) “The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.”

I think that's an interesting phrase that he uses at the end because the thought is that kings are reigning over the city, and He goes, “No, the city's reigning over the kings.” That it's the economy, stupid; that it's money. It's about those things. And it begins to literally tell the kings what to do. If you read throughout Scripture, no matter how great the king is, he's always worried about how the people are going to react, no matter how powerful he is. And you see that happening throughout Scripture because you realize that the economy has a big play in all of this. But it's about the allurements of the world. And

those allurements are calling us. Thus, Scripture refers to the cities as the “great harlot”. Why? Because you're being drawn to another love. What other love other than God? You're loving the things of the world rather than God. So, that's the picture of the harlot within the passage. And what's interesting is the morphing that takes place. Now, without us going into all of the verses that we went into last week, the picture is of now this harlot sitting on a beast. And at first we go, “Well, you know, she's going for a ride.” And the ultimate end is, yeah, he's taking her for a ride. So, the cities are actually going for a ride. In other words, the very ones that are alluring the people of the world to come into their selfish desires and pleasuring themselves... Well, it's why you go to stores and why you keep buying stuff new. You know, “I like new stuff. New and improved.” So, you always keep buying that new stuff and it keeps alluring you. But there's a force behind that. And this is what we're going to be talking about today. The force that comes in. I

mean, there's a seductress intoxication that moves us into the world and trust in the things of the world and we find ourselves, you know, hugging our cars... Not that I've ever done that... Or hugging our surfboards. But we find ourselves embracing the things of the world. It doesn't take long for that to happen. So, Scripture begins to remind us, "You don't want to go there." You say, "Well, you know, it's no big deal. I just kind of like it a lot." And He goes, "You're getting on the borderline." You say, "Well, what's the problem?" And here's the problem. And this, I think, is the great point of the passage you're going to be looking at. The problem is that the self-indulgence will always lead to brutality. This is why you have the woman on the beast, because it's showing that segue into that realm in which starts off being just feeding my desires, ends up in brutality and savagery.

How do we know this? Well, go back to James, just by way of reminder. I'd really appreciate it if you guys had about 5 hours. I don't know how much time you have. If you

look with me in James and it starts off in Chapter 4. You know, you get to a point of savagery and brutality and you go, “Where did that come from?” You know, people start fighting each other. You get two people; they go, and they marry each other. And they tell you that the reason that they married each other is because they just fell in love. They love each other so much. They love each other. And then money starts getting in. And then before long, you see those same people taking each other to court. And you're going, “What happened? I thought you really loved the person.” And you realize that somehow savagery has come in.

Well, the passage reads this way,

(James 4:1) “What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures...”

What did it start off with? You were trying to feed your pleasures, right?

“... that wage war in your members?”

(James 4:2) You lust and do not have; so you commit murder...”

How did I get to savagery? Well, it started with you going after your selfish pursuits, your selfish desires. See, it doesn't just end with you getting something. It ends with you killing someone. And what Scripture is revealing is that it's not just an innocuous event for you to go and start self-indulging. That's not going to end there. In fact, there's never enough. Where it's going to go is you're going to become hostile and brutal towards anybody that gets in your way of getting what you want. And it doesn't matter who they are.

So, in Revelation 17, that play starts coming in as we come to these next few verses in which how strange it is to see the harlot, and she's drinking the blood of the saints.

If you'll jump into Revelation 18, if you look with me, once again, it talks about “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!”

Then you go into verse 3,

(Revelation 18:3) “For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her...”

Immorality making reference specifically to immoral in that they've loved the world. This is the immorality that He's talking about. It could be other nefarious things. But that you've loved the world more than God. That's what makes it immoral. You've loved the things of the world more than God.

So, it says,

“...committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality.””

And as you go on in the chapter, and we'll get there, we'll talk about all the things that are a part of this. And it goes on, and it says that the saints were the ones that were slain by her.

In fact, it comes to the end of this, and it says,  
(Revelation 18:24) “And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth.”

In other words, people have been fighting over money. People have been fighting over their selfish indulgence. People have been fighting over more; what they want. Of course, when you think about nations and how they've gone and tried to conquer other nations, why? Well, they're trying to find gold someplace. And how many people have died in the pursuit of more? How many people have died?

So, this is the picture that's given to us. And John, as he's seen this graphic picture before his eyes, is going, “It's unbelievable. It's unbelievable.” And I think at first, sometimes the sheer shock catches us off guard. And you see that kind of picture within the passage.

It says,

(Revelation 17:6) “And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. When I saw her, I wondered greatly.”

You can hear the sheer shock of it all that has taken him off course. Could it be that this is what the world is being driven by? Well, no wonder I feel oppressed. No wonder I feel unloved when I go into the place. I've heard very few people say, “You know, I went in the heart of New York and I just felt the love.” Now, they paint these big hearts and try to feed you that baloney, but you know that you don't feel the love. And this is the point. You don't. You feel just the opposite. And it's that oppression. And you think of people jumping out of windows because the stock market falls. What's that about? But it just wraps around you. And before long, it takes one life after another life after another life and all the blood that has been shed.

Well, now verse 7 we pick up, in which we now follow, if I could say, the shift goes from the harlot now to the beast.

And there's a description within the passage as well. I can honestly say, I've not looked forward to preaching this to you because there are a lot of ins and outs of this particular passage, and I feel trepidatious about it because I don't want to leave out certain things, but I know you probably don't want to stay until midnight. So, what we're going to be looking at specifically is, once again, why is He giving us this information, and why is He giving it to the church, and what does He want us to do different in light of this truth? Because otherwise it just becomes a venture of just accumulating understanding or knowledge about something which isn't beneficial if you don't put it to practice.

As you come into verse 7, it says,

(Revelation 17:7) “And the angel said to me, “Why do you wonder? ...”

“Why do you wonder about these things? I'll tell you what this mystery is.” And he'll begin to describe it. Of course,

at the end of this Chapter 17, he'll say the woman is the cities. Of course, we've already read it. We cheated. But it says, "This is who she is..." So, he's revealing these things, and that's what Revelation does.

He goes on, and he says this,

"... I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her..."

Now, I want you to underline the word "carries" because the emphasis of this particular word in the Greek, it's in the genitive case; which the genitive case in the Greek is that it shows ownership. So, the point is that the beast owns the woman. That's the picture within the passage. And it's showing that he sustains her, that he supports her, and in some way that he actually endures her. They put up with each other sort of thing. But anyway, he's carrying her. She's a burden to him, but the beast is carrying her and he owns her. Now, you first see the

picture, and your perception is, “She's riding the beast; she owns the beast.” That's not the way it is.

So, the text says,

“... the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.”

And we've already seen this picture before. Where did we see this picture before? Revelation 13. You all knew that, right? I heard it right away.

So, turn to Chapter 13, and it shows, once again, the picture of the beast.

(Revelation 13:1) “And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names.”

Now, the picture is, of course, that this beast, if you look in Revelation 13:1, is coming out of the sea. And the reference to the sea, once again, as you come to the end

of Chapter 17, is to show us that it's coming out of the population of the world. The seas are like the mass of the peoples. And how fickle they are, driven and tossed by the wind and the wicked are like the tossing sea. We can go through all the passages. But the picture is that this beast is coming out of the peoples.

As we come into the passage, He now is going to explain to us about the seven heads and the ten horns.

If you look in the passage, it says, and just to kind of throw in one more confusing point in verse 8,

(Revelation 17:8) “The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come...”

So, just in case you thought, “I'm just about ready to get this.”

“The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction...”

So, it's ultimately ending showing the demise of this particular beast.

Now, this is a very interesting point here too,

“... And those who dwell on the earth...”

Which gives reference to present active in the tense, but it actually in the Greek uses the word “home”. They call this their home.

What you're going to find is, whether it's the Book of Hebrews or James, wherever you go, but we as believers, 1 John, don't call this our home. It's like Abraham. Of course, Peter will say, “We're strangers. We're aliens. This isn't where we belong.” But the rest of the world calls it their home. This is home to them. That's the point of this passage.

And those who call this earth their home, who dwell on the earth...

Watch the phrase,

“... will wonder...”

Now, “*thaumazō*,” the word that He uses in the passage is a kind of admiration. In other words, they'll see the beast and they'll see it as something to admire because this is their home. So, there's some kind of correlation- Making this your home will cause you to see the beast differently than the way that believers see the beast. Because, it goes on and says, their name was not written in the Book of Life. So, there are some who's written in the Book of Life; they see it differently. But the ones who aren't see it as something to wonder about and something to admire and something really to adore.

“... from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.”

That's the second time that repeats it, and it will repeat it one more time. So, that seems to be an issue as we go in the passage. I'm not going to skip over it. I'm going to talk about it.

(Revelation 17:9) “Here is the mind which has wisdom.  
The seven heads are seven mountains on which the  
woman sits.”

So, he’s actually going into some kind of explanation at this juncture. Seven mountains. When you think of mountains, what do you think of? Well, “exalted places” is probably the best way we can describe it at this juncture. We don't know a whole lot beyond that point.

And then it states in verse 10,

(Revelation 17:10) “and they are seven kings...”

So, you have seven heads that are like seven mountains, which the women sits on, and they are seven kings. Now, to just perceive this word that it uses for kings as just individual kings would be erroneous because He's not simply talking about just kings. He's talking about kingdoms. So, though you would have a ruler over a kingdom, He's talking about the whole kingdoms, thus a mountain is making reference to that fact.

“and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while.

(Revelation 17:11) The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction.”

So, once again, just to add a little bit more confusion towards the end.

What he's talking about within the passage are clearly kingdoms. And what we understand is that each kingdom has its cities. Babylon had its great city, Babylon. The kingdom of Assyria had its great city, Nineveh. Every great kingdom has its great city. So that the cities are there as an example of, what is man trying to accomplish? Well, he's trying to feed his desires. But what is really controlling all of this? The nations, the countries, the kingdoms of the world, so that America or England or the different kingdoms of the world are controlling their

cities. The cities have these allurements? Yeah, and people live in them, and they try to function, and they try to find fulfillment. They try to find satisfaction. They try to find pleasure and happiness. Thus, they go to the cities for this. But there's a greater power that is controlling this. And so, in the passage, what he does is he makes mention of the fact that five have fallen.

Now, I could go for a really long time in this. But let me just cut to the chase here. There are five great nations that were world powers, and that's what he's talking about, powers that were literally wielded by the evil one. I don't know if you knew this, but there are forces behind these great nations. And what we understand biblically is, these great nations which were world powers, and that's what we're talking about. We're literally being moved by a nefarious entity, spiritual forces in high places, so that when you talk about them...

For instance, let me give you an example. One that we know has already gone in its power, and that's what it's

talking about; not that they're not totally non-existent, but they're no longer great power, is Egypt.

And we know according to Ezekiel 29, let me just give you a quote here in verse 3, that it says,

(Ezekiel 29: 3) “Speak and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt...”

Now, listen how He describes him.

“... The great monster that lies in the midst of his (Nile) rivers...”

Now, why is Egypt perceived as a monster besides the fact that Egypt adored monsters? When you see the word “beast” here within the text, it's a metaphor for ferocious, brutal, even venomous creatures. And of course, we know one of the gods that they worship was even the snake. But beyond that point, why is He perceiving Egypt as the great monster? The answer is easy. The monster is trying to swallow up His people.

Now, this brings us to Chapter 12 of Revelation. And if you back up, you remember that was kind of a summary chapter. And the chapter reads as a description of God loving His people and He personifies His people as a woman. Remember? And then she has this crown with twelve diadems in it, and of course, the twelve tribes. And He gives her everything because He loves His people.

If you look in verse 3,

(Revelation 12:3) “Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns...”

Is that reminding you of something? Okay, so you now have a picture of kingdoms, seven kingdoms in particular, that are set out to do what? Well, look at this passage.

(Revelation 12:4) “And his (the dragon) tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about

to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.”

He wants to destroy the woman and the child. But that's his desire, to stop the process. So, you have these mountains, these powers, these nations that have come into play, and God looks at Egypt, and He goes, “You're a monster.” They were trying to devour His people. They wanted His people devoured. The same thing is true with Assyria. Assyria comes along, and of course, God at one point tells Jonah, “You need to go and preach the message of God's love to these people.” Of course, Jonah goes, “I'm not going. These people are mean. They want to kill us all. They want to slaughter us all.” And you can understand that he's reticent about that. But Assyria is described in Isaiah 8:7-8 as the strong and abundant waters that will rise up against Judah. And in Isaiah 10:7, the plan of Sennacherib specifically, who was the kingdom at that time, his plan was, it says, in his heart, his plan, his intent was to destroy or annihilate God's people,

just wipe them off the planet. That was his plan. Now, He says, "I'm not going to let him do that." The description, interestingly enough, in Nahum, of Nineveh, was "Woe to the bloody city, the harlot who sells the nation." So, what you're seeing is a pattern of world powers. Assyria was a world power at that point, the most powerful nation in the world. It literally sucked in all the others. So, God is revealing what was their design. Well, if you think about it, were they really attacking Jerusalem, Judea, because they needed stuff? It wasn't as much that. It went really beyond the realm of pragmatism, and we're talking really about hate in which they literally just wanted to wipe these people off the face of the earth. And so, in every case, God is showing these world powers as forces trying to kill the woman, trying to kill the child that He loves. We say, "Well, they were great powers." So, the world is awed by them. "You see how powerful those Egyptians are? Wow, have you ever seen those pyramids? Wow, what a beast." See? Because why? They live here. But we

go, “How terrible it is that they enslaved them, that they abused them, that they used them. How horrific that is.”

So, we have five that have been. The first two have already gone by the time Daniel comes along. Daniel then mentions, and I'm not going to have you turn to Daniel, we don't have time, but Daniel's going to mention in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 of four more beasts to come. Now, when he mentions them, and we know who he's mentioning- It's Babylon at that time, which is now the world power, has taken over Assyria and has now become the world power. And the interesting thing about this is that, of course, Babylon is really described as... I'll just read you the text.

(Isaiah 14:12) “How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations!

(Isaiah 14:13) But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God...’

Well, the picture is of Lucifer who was literally controlling Babylon; who was wanting to swallow up God's people. But God was holding them back in this process. But they take them into captivity. And so, you have the great city of Babylon.

What's interesting is, He says there are four more beasts. And then He goes on and explains, these are four nations, it goes on and says kingdoms, to come. But as He begins to mention them, how does He describe Babylon? A lion, right? And the lion has wings. And of course, if you ever looked at the ancient pictures or the carvings, what did they have by their thrones or by their gates? A lion with wings. So, it's a picture. And then He goes and He talks about the Medes and the Persians, and that's the bear. And then He talks about the leopard, which runs swiftly and has four wings. And the four wings, not only the four generals of Alexander the Great, but shows how swiftly he destroyed the kingdoms. Well, in Daniel, he actually mentions Greece and he mentions Medes and the

Persians and those being the nations that he's referring to. The bottom line is we know that these mountains are kingdoms that have a purpose to destroy God's people. And even the Medes and the Persians, although they initially came back and helped them rebuild, by the time you come to the Book of Esther, there's a total destruction of the people that is sought for in that particular book. And the whole thing of Purim, in which literally comes from casting of lots, in which the one nefarious individual by the name of... Remember his name? Haman. There you go. This one guy that comes, an Agagite, he goes, "I'm going to slaughter them all." But he wants good luck to do it. So, he starts throwing, we'll call him dice. He starts throwing his dice, Pur, or lots. That's where you get Pur from. He starts in the first month of Nisan, the first month of the Jewish calendar. He starts throwing them, and he can't get an okay. So, he keeps doing this every day, and he ends up on the twelfth month. And finally, the dice hit. This is the time to get

them. And so, he then plans his whole plan. Of course, we know that God thwarts the whole plan. And we know that ultimately the Jews now celebrate the celebration of Purim, or the casting of lots, which ultimately turned out to be in their favor. So, it's kind of a celebration, "We won the casting of lots, even though he perceived it as something that would destroy us. We won."

The point is that you have these nations that have all been out to destroy God's kingdom. The interesting thing, if you back up into Revelation 13... And remember Daniel, he gives Babylon the lion, Medes and Persians the bear, and then Greece the leopard? Remember that?

Watch in Revelation 13:2,

"And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion..."

What do you think He's telling you? Yeah, what's interesting is He's going in the reverse because he's seen

it from future and now past. So, he's seeing the kingdoms as first, if you look at the passage, first it was the Greeks, then it was the bear, the Medes and the Persians, then it goes back to the Babylon. Where Daniel was seeing it at the time of Babylon, then they were going to go into Medes and Persians, then it was going to be Greece that was coming in. So, you're going to see it in reverse. Once again, the picture is of nations. That's the whole point of the passage. I could go more in depth about this because there's so much to see within the text. But what you're seeing is that there are these forces that rose up against God's people.

Now, there's something that He wants you to see. And because of my time, I need to help you focus in on this verse 8,

(Revelation 17:8) “The beast that you saw was, and is not...”

Okay. So, what we have is a picture of these nations that he sees as a conglomerate. It's been a plan all along to devour God's people and the nations that have come up as world power. The 4th power that Daniel speaks of is the nation of Rome. But he says Rome is going to be very different than all the other ones. And truly Rome has been very different. And Rome, strangely enough, was not destroyed. It just sort of disseminated. And it goes into other nations. So, Rome was really never conquered, unlike the other ones that were swallowed up by others. So, you have this 4th beast that as Daniel gives the interesting picture of this beast, not only being unique in so many ways, but out of this will come one that will arise, that will take control. And it has this picture that it will have all of the characteristics of Egypt, of Assyria, and of Babylon. In other words, you pick all the “mean” out of all the nations, and this nation, this country that will come up to attack God's people will come in.

Now, the picture here, that the beast that you saw was, which we understand had always been a force to attack the woman, and then is not. It's the "is not" that I want to talk to you about at this moment, because we're talking about in the time of this church as well as even in our time. The point of the matter is that something happened when Jesus came on the earth. What happened?

According to John 12, Jesus states this,

(John 12:31) "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out."

It's a very interesting picture.

He goes on to say in John 16:11,

"... the ruler of this world has been judged."

Now, we know that the ruler of this world's intent is to destroy God's people. We know that. And that's been clear all the way through, thus the beast. But we also know the wonderful truth that when Christ came and He died on the cross, He defeated evil. And you not only see

this in the Book of Colossians, but one of the great verses that we oftentimes quote from 1 John 4:4, right? “Greater is He that's in me than he that is in the world.” And you see this sense of protection, or of restraint of the evil that has now come into play so that at the beginning of Revelation, Christ declares in Revelation 1:8, “I have the keys to death and Hades.” He goes on and we read in Matthew where He's talking to Peter, He goes, “Look, the church cannot be overpowered by death. It cannot be overpowered. Your power cannot be thwarted.” So, you have this kind of restraining of a power that wants to swallow up evil. But the interesting thing about what happened when Christ came is that the Spirit of God came upon souls and those souls, think about this, permeated all the nations. There are Christians in every nation. And it becomes a restraining force.

2 Thessalonians, if you look with me. One of these days, I'm going to be in a book like Philippians or something. But 2 Thessalonians begins to talk about false prophets

that have arisen. The interesting thing about this particular chapter, of course the book, is written to people that have lost hope. And what happens when people lose hope is that they just give up. They just give up. So, he was having problems with people. They weren't going to their job. They weren't working. And then they started going into debauchery because they were trying to find some sort of immediate gratification. And so, his statement to them in 1 Thessalonians 4 is, "We're not as those who have no hope." But they were feeling this. Because of hopelessness, a person becomes vulnerable. One of the reasons why we have so many riots in certain places is because you have groups of people that feel hopeless and helpless; so that the anger man feels, going, "I should be getting more. I should be having more." There're the "haves" and the "have-nots". There are all kinds, but there's kind of a hostility and a sense of hopelessness as well that has permeated their thoughts. So, they tend to gravitate towards lawlessness. So, his

warning to them is, “Your sense of hopelessness is going to make you vulnerable to those that are saying, ‘Let's riot!’” That's basically Chapter 2.

He says,

(2 Thessalonians 2:2) “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.”

That would be a sense of hopelessness.

(2 Thessalonians 2:3) “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.”

It goes on and says, he's going to exalt himself, and he's going to display himself as an object of worship.

And then it'll say this in verse 7,

(2 Thessalonians 2:7) “For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work...”

Now, watch the phrase here,

“... only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.”

Well, we believe that the “he” seems to be an impersonal pronoun within the passage; is that which defines Christians as lawful. And God has so peppered us into which a kingdom cannot be devised that would swallow up God's people at this time. He is not. Now, when the believers are taken out, he comes and takes over again to swallow up. And as you read the end of Revelation 12, he goes after the woman. Why? Because he can't get to the child. Who's the child? “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to be called children of God, even to those who believe in His name.” He's not just referring to the fact that Christ has been seated at the right hand of the Father. He's talking about the fact that His children

are home. So, the beast has only one repercussion. And what is that? Destroy the woman. And that's why the tribulation is all about the destruction of Israel. That's why the tribulation is all about the nations coming in to destroy Jerusalem.

I'm going to have to wind up at this point. There's a lot more that we could say. But the passage is basically saying that savagery is alluring to the world. They're drawn to it. But Scripture is telling the church, "But it has no part in you. You've been called to restrain savagery." Let me just emphasize, this is why when Scripture says, "Look, never pay back evil for evil." Why? Because you just lose your restraint power. God calls us to be a restraining agency. And He goes on, He says, "Never take your own revenge." Never. That's pretty clear, I think, don't you? Seems like in every situation, so that Matthew 5:4, He says, "You've got to be like your Father. You have to be charitable. And if your enemy comes at you, pray for him. You don't attack back." You know, we live in a world

that tries to get back at people all the time, but you know who our King is? He's already been defined in Revelation. "The lamb as if slain." That's the One. Now, compare that to the beast. And that shows how different we are. So that this picture that He's given is that the force has been sustained for a while. We are allowed, the church, and this is why He's saying it's important you don't become like the world because you're the only restraining force at this point in time in the world. And you're holding back all these terrible things; so that Peter will say, "Look, if you're mistreated by your boss, you still give him a blessing. Wife, if your husband's doing the wrong thing, by your gentle and quiet spirit, you win him over." And all the way through, it doesn't matter if it's Peter or James or whatever the book is, you respond correctly because we are the restraining force.

**Closing Prayer:**

Father, we give You thanks for Your word and for the reminder of what You have in store for us and the things that have been going on in this world from the beginning and the hostility that there has been and existed for the destruction of the righteous one. Lord, we give You thanks that You're greater in us than the one that's in the world. And You've given us the keys to death and Hades, and You've given us the keys to life. And whatever we bind on earth will be bound in heaven. Whatever we loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. The gospel cannot be thwarted. So, how should we spend our lives? And where should our focus be? And what should the church be doing? And You remind us in this wonderful way, given us this wonderful picture, of these powerful forces that the world is so enthralled with, but we are not. We are embracing the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed. This is a message to the church. Thus, He's speaking to you. You and I

cannot respond aggressively in hate towards other people. We are the restraining force through the power of the Spirit of God. And the kingdom of the prince of the power of the air is just that. But as John says in 1 John 5, he cannot touch us. We walk by faith, not by sight. And the power of God resides within us. We should walk that way. And we should divorce ourselves from the things of the world, not try to be like the world, but to be very unique and different. With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, I'm just asking you to beckon God to change your heart that you might be a restrainer. Scripture puts it another way- We are light in the world. Our world is full of darkness. It puts it another way- We are the salt of the earth. We're here to preserve and to restrain. And God has given us this gracious ministry for a time. May we use it correctly.