

THE JUDGMENT OF THE BEAST
REVELATION 17:7-8

Revelation chapter 17, verses 7 and 8, will be the focus of our study, but we want to read the whole chapter together.

“¹ And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: ² with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. ³ So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. ⁴ And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: ⁵ and upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. ⁶ And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

⁷ And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. ⁸ The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. ⁹ And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. ¹⁰ And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. ¹¹ And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition. ¹² And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. ¹³ These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. ¹⁴ These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

¹⁵ And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. ¹⁶ And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. ¹⁷ For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. ¹⁸ And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.”

Now today, we enter into what is arguably the most difficult passage in the entire book of Revelation to interpret. In verses 7 to 18, which is the most difficult passage in the entire book of Revelation to interpret, the big picture is pretty clear, but the difficulty lies in the details, and

in the complex language, and in the density of ideas that are contained within that language. There is a lot of meaning in every word and every phrase. Each verse is loaded with information.

Now to properly grasp what is being conveyed here not only requires sustained and focused attention and thought, it also requires careful analysis of the symbolic language that is employed, and a proper understanding of the meaning of the symbolic figures that are used.

So as we approach this section in verses 7 to 18, this week and in the weeks to come, you're going to have to focus, and you're going to have to give extended attention to the complex language and the density of ideas and the symbolic significance of the words that are employed in this passage if you're going to understand it. In a word, there is some hard mental work ahead of you if you are going to avoid being lost and confused in the language of this particular passage.

Now last time, we looked together at verses 1 to 6, and we saw that an angel told John that he was going to show him God's judgment on the harlot Babylon, which represents anti-Christian society. But initially, the angel gave John a sight of the prosperity, and the success, and the power, and the seductiveness of this harlot Babylon; this anti-Christian society through the ages. The angel revealed the close relationship between the harlot Babylon and the beast, who represents anti-Christian government.

And so anti-Christian society—the harlot Babylon, and anti-Christian government—the beast, worked very closely together in order to promote the blasphemy of God, in order to accomplish the persecution of Christians, and in order to practice every possible abomination. Both government and society are intoxicated with the murder of Christians and with the practice of every kind of perversion of morality, both in thought and also in deed.

As John saw the strength, and the prosperity, and the success of this evil cooperation between the harlot Babylon and the beast, John is overwhelmed and he is amazed. John had been told in verse 1 of chapter 17 that he was going to be shown the judgment of the great whore, but all he has seen thus far is her glory and her success. And so John, at the end of verse 6, is dumbfounded with amazement.

And we stand today where John stood at the end of verse 6. All we have seen for the last 2,000 years is the prosperity, and the success, and the power, and the perversion of the harlot Babylon. Anti-Christian society and anti-Christian government have been working closely together to seduce the world away from Christ with great success for the last 2,000 years.

It says in Jeremiah 51 and verse 7, "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad." The whole world is insane in its rebellion against God, as a result of the harlot Babylon. John saw that, and we see that today, and we wonder at and are overwhelmed by the success of

the anti-Christian forces in the world, and we doubt if there will ever be any way that the forces of evil will ever be defeated. Thus, verses 1 to 6.

But notice verse 7. “And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.” And so after seeing the prosperity and the success of the harlot Babylon in union with the beast, the angel says to John, Do not marvel at the power and success of anti-Christian government and anti-Christian society. The harlot Babylon and the beast are both going to be defeated by Jesus Christ.

And so the angel says to John, I will explain this mystery, this previously undisclosed truth about the demise and the destruction of both the harlot Babylon, as well as the beast. And then he proceeds to explain about the demise and destruction of Babylon and the beast in the remainder of chapter 17, and in all of chapter 18.

So this, then, is going to be the theme of the next section that we’re going to be studying and looking at for some time in the future. We are going to see the defeat of both the beast and the harlot Babylon at the hands of Christ.

Notice verse 14. It says, “These,” that is, the harlot and the beast, “shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.” Now verse 14 of chapter 17 is the key verse of the entire book of Revelation. Here in this one verse we see the summary of the message of the entire book, and that is, Satan and his helpers are going to make war with Christ, and Christ is going to make war with them, and Christ is going to defeat them, and Christ is going to triumph, and in His triumph is the triumph of His people, who are called and chosen and faithful.

Satan and his helpers make war with Christ and His people, but the Lamb will overcome them. Christ will triumph and His people, those who are called and chosen and faithful, will triumph with Him; and the dragon, and the beast, and the false prophet, and Babylon, and all of those who have the mark of the beast will go down to defeat under the heel of Christ, for He, it says in verse 14, is Lord of lords and King of kings. So that’s the message: The harlot and the beast make war against Christ and His people; Christ is going to defeat the harlot and the beast and vindicate His people.

Well, now we can all go home, right? We’re done. Well, there’s some details we need to address. And so what we’re going to do today is begin to focus on each of these verses, and we’re going to understand the language and the information that they convey to us.

So in the first place then, let’s consider together the summary of the judgment of the beast. The summary of the judgment of the beast is contained in verse 8. Notice verse 8 says, “The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition:

and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast”—notice once again—“that was, and is not, and yet is.”

Now although the angel has told John that he is going to show him the judgment of the harlot Babylon in verse 1, John begins with the judgment of the beast, upon whom the harlot Babylon was riding, because before he can get to the judgment of the harlot Babylon, he’s got to talk about the judgment of the beast on which the harlot is riding.

Now the career of the beast in verse 8 is traced from start to finish with these four points: number 1, the beast *was*; number 2, the beast *is not*; number 3, the beast *shall ascend out of the bottomless pit*; number 4, the beast *will go into perdition*. Now those four points are in the first half of verse 8.

Verse 8: “The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition.” Those four things are said about the beast. These four phrases summarize the total existence of the beast, and so we want to try to understand those four phrases and what they mean. So I need your focused attention.

The beast, as we have said many times, represents and symbolizes anti-Christian government. That’s been well-established already. Such anti-Christian government has existed from the beginning of the formation of human societies. Their beast-like character was made clear by Daniel, when in Daniel chapter 7, Daniel likens the Babylonian empire to a lion; the Medo-Persian empire to a bear; the Grecian empire to a leopard; and the Roman empire to a nameless, strong, terrible, and dreadful beast that has teeth of iron. So Daniel describes these four world empires as being four great beasts, in Daniel chapter 7 and in verse 3.

Now the dragon, who symbolizes Satan in the book of Revelation, has always been the energizing power behind each of these kingdoms. In fact, Satan is the energizing power behind all human governments on earth, wherever they have been located, and whenever they have existed. All human governments are manifestations of the beast, and all of them are energized and empowered by Satan. We read in Revelation chapter 13 and verse 2 that the dragon gives the beast his power, his throne, and his authority.

Now prior to the first coming of Christ, Satan was at liberty to pretty much do as he pleased among the kingdoms of the world—from the creation to Christ. During those first 4,000 years, Satan was at liberty to pretty much do as he pleased among the kingdoms of the world. Those kingdoms constituted *his* kingdom, and he gave them their power and their direction, and that is what gave them their predatory nature, symbolized in the predatory beasts that represented each of them.

And while these satanically empowered kingdoms succeeded one another in history, one thing was a constant among them all, and that is, they were always united in their efforts to suppress and destroy the kingdom of God and the people of God on earth.

However, even though Satan was pretty much free to act as he wished among the governments of the earth, from the Fall to the first coming of Christ, he was still under the restraint and sovereign control of God, to the degree that he could not extinguish the kingdom of God on earth.

Nevertheless, Satan was able to keep the kingdom of God on earth very small, so that at one point in time prior to the Flood, the kingdom of God only existed of eight people on the earth, who subsequently got into the ark.

And after the Flood, Satan was able to continue to keep the kingdom of God exceedingly small, confining it to a few hundred thousand people, and confining it to a tiny piece of land in the Middle East. The kingdom of God was the nation of Israel, in the land of Israel—at most, a very few million people, occupying one ten-thousandth of the habitable land area of the earth.

I did the math, and I excluded Antarctica—just took all the habitable land masses of the earth. I calculated the square miles—52 million square miles of them—and then the land of Israel is only 8,000 square miles. And you do the math: one ten-thousandth of the habitable land on the face of the earth. That's how big the kingdom of God was at its maximum size between the Fall and the first coming of Christ. So the whole rest of the world, outside of itty-bitty, tiny Israel—the whole rest of the world was under the darkness of Satan's rule for 4,000 years.

However, when Christ came, there was a dramatic change. Satan, who previously was free to virtually do what he pleased among the kingdoms of the world, was now bound and chained by Christ at His first coming. No longer was Satan able to deceive the nations and their anti-Christian civil governments, as he was in the past.

You remember that the Pharisees said of Jesus, in Matthew 12:24 and following, Oh, He casts out demons by the prince of demons. And He said, No, that cannot be true. He says that a king who's divided against himself cannot stand. He says, I have come to conquer Satan's kingdom. And then you recall He said, How can you enter into the strong man's house and spoil his goods, except you first bind the strong man? And once you have bound him, then you can go into his house and take his stuff.

So at the first coming, Jesus bound Satan, and now Jesus is in Satan's kingdom taking whatever He wants and whomever He wants, out of the kingdom of Satan, out of the kingdom of darkness, and bringing it into the kingdom of light—into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Christ so sharply curtailed Satan's liberty and ability to deceive the beastly governments of the earth that it was like Satan had departed from the scene. It was like Satan had been removed from the world stage and was bound and buried in a pit. And of course, that's exactly what the Bible tells us happened.

Turn in your Bibles please to Revelation chapter 20:1-3. John says: “And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”

Now what is being described here in Revelation chapter 20, verses 1 to 3, is what happened at the cross when Jesus bound the strong man. And so this thousand-year period is once again a symbolic number that describes the entire time between the first and the second coming of Jesus, just like the forty two months describes that same time frame; the three and half years—the time, the times, and the half-time. So then, for the last 2,000 years, Satan has been bound and buried, with reference to his ability to deceive the governments of the world in the way he used to be able to do so, prior to the first coming of Christ.

Now the result of the binding of Satan and the reduction of his power to deceive the nations is that the governments that he was the energizing power behind have also had their power reduced as a result. If Satan is energizing the nations of the world, and Satan gets bound, what impact does that have on the nations of the world? Well, the energizing power he was giving to them to suppress the kingdom of God has been dramatically reduced and restrained.

Because Satan has been bound in the pit, and therefore cannot deceive and empower the human governments of the world like he did before the first coming of Christ, human governments of the world have been weak and unable to suppress the kingdom of God and the people of God like they once did. The result has been an explosion of the kingdom of God across the globe, to the degree that Christianity has become the dominate religion in the whole world. No longer is the kingdom of God several hundred thousand people confined to a country barely a hundred miles long and forty miles wide. Now the kingdom of God covers the whole earth, and numbers in the billions of people.

However, at the end of this age, Satan will be loosed from his pit, as Revelation 20 and verse 3 said. “He must be loosed for a little season.” Satan will experience a resurrection of his power and influence over the nations, and the anti-Christian governments will receive a tremendous infusion of a new level of power and energy from Satan they have not had since the first coming of Christ. Anti-Christian governments will suddenly have a revival of anti-Christian fervor that only existed between the fall and the first coming, and hasn’t existed for the last 2,000 years, to the degree it did before the first coming of Christ.

Once again, the beast will strive to suppress and eradicate the kingdom of God like it did before the first coming. They got it down to eight people! And they’re going to try to do the same thing

again. Because of the revived power of Satan, because he has been loosed, human governments will have a renewed power of persecution, only experienced by the people of God before the first coming. So we see that the activity of anti-Christian governments, that is, the activity of the beast, mirrors and parallels the activity of Satan himself, because Satan is the one who gives the beast his authority, his throne, and his power.

So what do we see, then, with Satan? He was alive from the Fall to Christ's first coming. And then he went through a kind of a death and a burial when he was bound and plunged into the bottomless pit, beginning at the resurrection of Christ and continuing on to this very day. But he will have a resurrection from the pit and a return to power at the end of this age. Satan will be loosed and it will be, as it were, a second coming of Satan in which he has his previous power and ability and activity restored to him.

Now take careful note of this. What happens to Satan happens to the beast that he empowers. The careers of the dragon and the beast run parallel to each other, because the one is dependent upon the other. As goes the one, so goes the other; as goes Satan, so goes the beast. So what we see happening with Satan is exactly what happens to the beast.

Before the first coming, the beast had full power and full authority and full motivation and full liberty to oppress the kingdom of God, and was very successful at it. After the first coming, the beast lost life and power and ability to effectively stop the spread of the kingdom of God. The beast became weak, like the feet of Daniel's image that were made part of iron and part of clay—they couldn't get it together to effectively suppress the kingdom of God, like they'd done for the previous 4,000 years. The beast could not have the unity of purpose and singleness of mind and purity of motive and constancy of strength to stop the two witnesses of Revelation 11, who represent the church. He could not stop them from completing their mission of evangelizing the whole world and all of God's elect. Not until their testimony was finished, was there the release of Satan and his power.

When all the work of evangelism is done, when all of the elect are saved, Satan will be loosed, and as a result, the final beast—the final manifestation of the beast, which is the Antichrist and his transnational worldwide coalition and kingdom, will arise. The beast will revive. He will have a new infusion of power to persecute the people of God. The final beast, the Antichrist, the beast that arises out of the bottomless pit, will suddenly come to life with a unified and powerful zeal to crush the kingdom of God.

So what can we say historically about the beast? We can say, regarding the beast, he *was*. From the fall to the first coming of Christ, the beast had full power and full function to oppress the kingdom of God, and he did.

And then we can say about the career of the beast, he *is not*. From the first coming to this present moment, in every century for the last 2,000 years, we can say of the beast that Christ has

so bound Satan, the source of the beast's energy, that it is though the beast has ceased to function in any meaningful manner to stop the spread of the gospel and the kingdom of God.

Now have there been bits and pieces of persecutions against the church? Have there been some short-term efforts, lasting a few decades, to try to extinguish the church in this or that location or country? Yes, there have been. There still are. But for all intents and purposes, the beast has been absent from mounting any concerted or meaningful effort to stop or reverse the spread of Christianity across the world and into every nation of the earth. We can say that for the last 2,000 years, even up to this very present moment, we can say right now, the beast is not.

However, the day is coming when the beast will come roaring back to life. It will be like a resurrection. The beast will ascend out of the bottomless pit. You recall that we identified the beast out of the bottomless pit in Revelation 11 and verse 7 as the Antichrist and his worldwide coalition of nations that will unify with him to seek to kill the church from off the face of the earth. Because Satan is loosed, Antichrist and his kingdom will arise.

Antichrist and his kingdom *is* the final manifestation of the beast. Antichrist and his kingdom is the beast out of the bottomless pit of verse 8, as well as the beast out of the bottomless pit of Revelation 11 and verse 7. Remember we said there were three beasts: the beast out of the sea, anti-Christian government; the beast out of the earth, otherwise known as the false prophet; and then the beast out of the bottomless pit, which is Antichrist and his kingdom.

So the beast will come roaring back to life with a new power that Satan infuses into it, because now Satan is finally free to energize and empower the nations like he hasn't been free to do since the first coming of Christ. The visible manifestation of this exercise of the resurgent power of Satan will be the rise of Antichrist and his transnational, worldwide coalition of all the kingdoms of the earth, united together in their determination to reduce the church to nothing; and they will be largely successful in doing that.

Remember the two bodies of the witnesses of Revelation 11, laid in the streets and the world rejoiced over the triumph that they had had over the church. They even sent presents to each other. You recall, it was party time, because the church had been wiped off the earth for all intents and purposes, in terms of her public and visible presence and testimony. Now there was a remnant left, and there always will be, but it will be a small remnant. Antichrist's goal is to eradicate the church from the earth, and cause all of the earth to worship *him* as God.

But what will happen to the beast that arises out of the bottomless pit? Now we come to number 4 of verse 8: He will go into perdition. Antichrist and his kingdom will be cast into hell. Notice if you will Revelation 19, verses 19 and 20: "And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped

his image. These both”—that is, the beast and false prophet—“were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.”

Now this same event of Christ driving the beast into perdition is also described in Daniel chapter 7 and verse 11, and in Daniel chapter 7 and verse 26. In Daniel chapter 7 and in verse 11, it says: “I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake.” Now the horn is the Antichrist. “I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.” That’s the Antichrist going into perdition. The final beast and his kingdom.

And then notice Daniel 7 and verse 26: “... and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end.” So his dominion is going to be ruined and he’s going to be cast into the pit.

Now turn please to Revelation chapter 11 and see the same event described. And you saw this when we expounded chapter 11, but I’ll remind you. We have the two witnesses who are preaching all throughout the time between the first and second coming of Christ, and it says of them, verse 7 of Revelation 11: “And when they shall have finished their testimony,”—look, nothing’s going to happen until all the elect are saved, and when it’s done, when they’ve finished the job of evangelizing the world, *then*, then “the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit”—now here’s our same beast as in Revelation 17 and verse 8—“the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them,” that is, against the two witnesses who represent the church, “and shall overcome them and kill them.”⁸ And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.⁹ And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations”—there’s the worldwide coalition under Antichrist, the beast out of the bottomless pit—“shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.” They will have complete disrespect for those they have slaughtered.

“¹⁰ And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. ¹¹ And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. ¹² And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither”—At the second coming, the rapture occurs, the believers go up to be with Christ to return in triumph with Him—“And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. ¹³ And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven. ¹⁴ The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

“¹⁵ And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. ¹⁶ And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, ¹⁷ saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and

wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. ¹⁸ And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth. ¹⁹ And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.” And so what we have here is the beast going into perdition.

When the beast experiences his resurrection, when Satan is loosed, and he has his short-term success in largely wiping the church off the face of the earth, he does not then go on to triumph. He then goes on to hell and to defeat for all eternity. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for He is King of kings and Lord of lords.

Notice Revelation chapter 20. We’ll start reading at verse 7: “⁷ And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, ⁸ and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. ⁹ And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed,” or surrounded, “the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. ¹⁰ And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

So we’re going to have the beast experiencing this resurrection of power under Antichrist, who’s going to form this transnational coalition of all the nations of the world. Unitedly, they’re going to strive to wipe the church off the face of the earth. They will be largely successful, except for a small remnant, and as they go to finally wipe out that small remnant, Christ will come and He will destroy Antichrist and all of his helpers, and they will all be cast into the lake of fire. And His people will be delivered, and His judgment will be set, and His kingdom will be established, and the new heavens and the new earth will come in. So when the beast experiences his resurrection, he then goes on to hell and defeat for all eternity. *But*, when Christ experiences *His* resurrection, He goes on to victory and to triumph.

Now I want you to turn in your Bibles please to Revelation 1:18, and see what it says about Jesus. Very interesting language here. Jesus is speaking, and He says: “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”

Now it’s interesting that we could say of Christ that He was. For thirty three years, he was. And then we could say of Christ, and He was not, for three days. He was in the grave, right? And then we could say of Christ that He ascended out of the grave. And then we could say of Him that He triumphs forevermore. What do we see of the beast? He was; he is not; he ascends up; but he goes down into hell. Christ was; was not; ascended out of the grave; and goes on to eternal triumph.

And that brings us to our second major point this morning. Having seen the summary of the judgment of the beast in verse 8a of Revelation 17, turn back, please, to Revelation 17 and verse 8. “The beast that thou sawest was,” for 4,000 years, right? “and is not,” from the time of Christ to the present moment. But “shall ascend out of the bottomless pit,” when Satan is loosed at the end of the age. And then when Jesus returns, he’ll “go into perdition.” That’s what that means.

Now notice the second half of verse 8. It says, “and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.” Now having then seen the summary of the judgment on the beast in verse 8a, notice in the second place, the admiration of the beast by the wicked in verse 8b. The admiration of the beast by the wicked—that’s our second major point.

Now when Satan is loosed at the end of this age and re-energizes the beast with unbridled zeal and power to wipe the church off the face of the earth, it will excite the enthusiasm and the admiration of the unsaved. The unsaved of the earth when Antichrist arises will give blind loyalty and reverent worship to him, because he will be presenting himself as God on earth.

Now turn in your Bibles please with me to Second Thessalonians chapter 2. I want you to notice Second Thessalonians chapter 2, and we’re going to start reading at verse 1: “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,”—now what is that? That’s the second coming and the rapture. We’re going to be gathered together to Him, right? He’s coming back, and we’re going to be gathered together with Him.

“¹ Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, ² that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.”

He’s saying the second coming of Christ and the rapture is not imminent. It’s not at hand. It’s not going to happen tomorrow.

He says, “³ Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come,” number one, “a falling away first.” That is, there’s going to be a great apostasy among the professing church. Why? Well, number two: “and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; ⁴ who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”

Now what’s being described in Revelation 17 and verse 8, when it says in the second half of that verse that “they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast”—that’s the description of this falling away. When they see the beast, they’re going to say, This isn’t just another president or king, this is God on earth. And the beast is going to demand that people worship him, and the false prophet is going to say to the people, You need to worship him, and those who won’t

worship him will be put to death. And those who love life more than they love Christ will apostatize and say, Oh, yes, we'll worship the beast.

So there's going to come this great falling away. There's going to come this great apostasy, and then the appearance of the man of sin, the Antichrist, setting himself up as God on earth, and the whole earth starts to worship him. And so the unsaved who dwell on the earth will not be able to see the deception they are under.

Now let's keep going in Second Thessalonians chapter 2. Verse 5: "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? ⁶ And now ye know what withholdeth," or restrains, "that he might be revealed in his time." The chain and the lock and the pit are restraining Satan now so that Satan might be revealed at the appropriate time. And until then, he isn't going to be revealed, and the Antichrist isn't going to show up.

Verse 7: "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work:"—all the elements for this process are set in place—"only he who now [restrains will continue to restrain], until he be taken out of the way." Now who's the "he"? It's the angel. Remember, it was the angel that had the chain and the lock, and he bound Satan and cast him into the pit?

And so the "what" of verse 6, Now you know *what* withholds—that's the chain, the lock, and the pit. And then verse 7, You know *who* withholds—that's the angel. And when the angel finally stops restraining him, then all this end-time stuff is going to occur. But not until then. So Paul says, Don't be worried, as though the second coming of Christ is imminent. It isn't imminent. I know people have been writing you letters in my name; people have been saying, Oh, I have a word from the Lord that the Lord's coming back next Tuesday, or whatever the latest end-times prophet says.

He says, But when he is taken out of the way, verse 8, "then shall that Wicked [One] be revealed." That's Antichrist; that's the guy in verses 3 and 4, the man of sin. "Then shall that Wicked [One] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:"—that's Revelation 19, verse 20—"even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, ¹⁰ and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ¹¹ And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: ¹² that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

"¹³ But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: ¹⁴ whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ Therefore, brethren, stand fast,"—Don't be deceived by the coming Antichrist and apostatize along with all the rest who loved the pleasures of unrighteousness more than they loved Christ.

And so the unsaved who dwell on the earth will not be able to see the deception they are under. They will be fully convinced by the false prophet to render worship to the man of sin, to this Antichrist, who is the final beast on the earth. That these people who worship Antichrist are unsaved is clear from the fact that their names are not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world.

Turn back, please, to Revelation 17 and verse 8. Notice Revelation 17 and verse 8. It says, “The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder,”—now notice—“whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not,” and in their life history, “and yet is”—Notice the present tense. So this group of people that’s being talked about here are the group of people who exist during the time of Antichrist.

Now the book of life is the record of the names of all of God’s elect who were chosen to be saved before the foundation of the world. Those who are saved have their names recorded there, and those whose names are absent from the book are those who are not, and will not, be saved. It is those whose names are not in the book of life who, though they may have professed to be Christians, will follow and serve and worship the final manifestation of the beast and the person of Antichrist in the end times. That is the great falling away.

On the other hand, the elect are preserved by Christ from being deceived into worshipping the Antichrist. In Matthew 24 and verse 24, it says, “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, *if it were possible*, they shall deceive the very elect.” But of course, it’s not possible.

And so when this false Christ comes, this Antichrist, and this false prophet arises to empower him and lead people toward him, he’s going to be so good, in terms of the deceivableness of unrighteousness and the miracles that he does, that if it were possible for the elect to be deceived, even they would be deceived. Fortunately, it’s not possible. Christ preserves His people, and no man can pluck them out of His hand.

You remember in Revelation 13, verses 11 to 15, it tells us that the false prophet will so deceive the non-elect with his power to do miracles, they will all worship the beast because of his deceptions. And the result of this deception is that the beast, the Antichrist, and all who worship him, will make war against the people of God and against the Son of God. And what will be the outcome of that war? “These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them.” Christ will triumph, and all those believers slaughtered by the Antichrist will return with Christ from heaven and share in Christ’s triumph and see vengeance exercised upon their enemies.