

TEXT - 2 Thessalonians 2:1-7

REVIEW

### **Summary/Theme/Main Idea of the Middle Section of Revelation (chs. 6-19)**

Rome, Perverse and Powerful, Persecutes the Saints  
Christ, Pure and Prevailing, Protects the Saints

### **When will these things happen?**

Historicist interpretation with application from Idealist view

The middle section of Revelation contains three sets of seven things, which communicate to us how Rome will oppose the churches, and how our Lord Jesus Christ will protect the churches, and bring judgment on Rome during three periods of time.

Chapter 6 - seven seals - Rome non-Christian pagan

Chapters 8-9 - seven trumpets - Rome Christian or Arian

Chapter 16 - seven vials or bowls - Rome Antichristian or Papal

### **Why Rome?**

Corrupt religion allied with corrupt government have persecuted the saints many times in many places, and still do today, and will until the Lord Jesus comes back. But Rome has been so much the center of such persecution, that our Lord Jesus showing us in powerful symbols how He will protect us from Rome and bring judgment on Rome gives us all the assurance we need that He will care for us, whether or not our troubles come directly from Rome.

But how can the interpretation of Revelation have so much to do with Rome, when Rome is never mentioned? not Rome, Roman, Romans, Caesar, Latin  
How can it be right for the pastor to tell you, "Most of the book of Revelation is about Rome" when none of the words that refer to Rome are even in the book of Revelation?

Powerful cities and countries in the region where God's people live had been the subject of prophecies in the previous scriptures many times.

When our Lord Jesus was born, Rome ruled over so large an area, it was spoken of as "all the world." Rome had ruled over that whole part of the world for generations, and would for generations into the future, so it would be strange for it not to play prominently.

When our Lord Jesus began to preach, rulers appointed by Rome were ruling over the places where He and his disciples lived.

Rome had the power to destroy whole nations, as the Jews feared they would do to them, and as the Romans actually did, destroying the Jews' temple and nation A.D. 70.

The book of Revelation proclaims judgment on the wicked specifically for crucifying our Lord Jesus and persecuting His saints, in terms of that being done in a certain city.

- Our Lord Jesus was crucified by the Romans.
- The Roman authorities persecuted the disciples.

## LESSON

If the right interpretation of Revelation is that it speaks to us about Rome,

**Why does Revelation not mention Rome or Caesar by name?**

Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come to set up an earthly kingdom to rival the Roman Empire, or to be a king to rival Caesar. The Roman governor who examined Jesus understood that and proclaimed it officially.

John 18:33-38 Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? 34 Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? 35 Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? 36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. 37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. 38 Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.

But Jesus' enemies still accused him of treason against Caesar, and that is what our Lord ostensibly was crucified for.

Luke 23:2 And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King.

Luke 23:38 And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Our Lord Jesus and His apostles did not teach us rebellion against Rome or Caesar, but instead to honor, pay taxes to, submit to, and pray for Rome and Caesar.

But the enemies of Jesus Christ continued to accuse us, His disciples, of treason against Rome and Caesar, to get us in trouble.

So our Lord Jesus, by His Holy Spirit, taught us, His disciples, what to expect in the future about God's judgment and wrath on Rome, without mentioning Rome.

The Christians could have this book among them, without carrying around what would seem to be evidence that they and their movement were subversive.

Notice how the apostle Paul did this:

2 Thessalonians 2:1-7 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. 3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, 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. 5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? 6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. 7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

- verse 3 the man of sin, son of perdition, would be the pope in Rome
- but before the pope could come to power in Rome, the power restraining him had to be taken out of the way

- verse 6 “what”

- verse 7 “he”

- the apostle means until the Emperor, Caesar, is taken out of the way

- the apostle has mentioned this to them in person

- the apostle won't say in this letter exactly what he's talking about

This interpretation was very common for hundreds of years from the Reformation until about 100 years ago. I read this in several standard sources, including the Geneva Bible study notes from the mid 1500s and Charles Spurgeon from the late 1800s.

Remember what had happened to the Christians in that city:

Acts 17:1-10 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: 2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, 3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. 4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. 5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. 6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; 7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. 8 And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. 9 And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go. 10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night...

So, if the right interpretation of Revelation is that it speaks to us about Rome, **Why does Revelation not mention Rome or Caesar by name?**

It is so that the disciples of Jesus Christ could not be misunderstood as being subversive of Rome or traitors against Caesar.

Spurgeon:

I believe that, to a large extent, this has already happened, and that the “man of sin” has been revealed. This “son of perdition” has had a long, dark, and terrible reign over myriads of men, and still he sitteth on the seven hills of Rome, and ruleth over multitudes of his fellow-sinners.

It has been said that the Pope of Rome is infallible, that his interpretation of Scripture, whatever it may be, is as valid as the Scripture itself, and that whatever he chooseth to decree must be obeyed by the faithful. Such are some of the pretensions even at this day of the “man of sin.”

signs have meaning to those who know from some other source what the sign signifies

Spurgeon:

I believe that, to a large extent, this has already happened, and that the “man of sin” has been revealed. This “son of perdition” has had a long, dark, and terrible reign over myriads of men, and still he sitteth on the seven hills of Rome, and ruleth over multitudes of his fellow-sinners. But Paul held that it was consistent to expect the Lord to come quickly, and yet to know that certain events must occur before he did come. That is just the condition, I think, to which a man’s mind will come if he diligently and impartially reads the Scriptures, especially the prophetic parts of them. The Lord will come in such an hour as we think not, yet there are clear indications of certain things which are to happen before he does come.

It has been said that the Pope of Rome is infallible, that his interpretation of Scripture, whatever it may be, is as valid as the Scripture itself, and that whatever he chooseth to decree must be obeyed by the faithful. Such are some of the pretensions even at this day of the “man of sin.”

Geneva:

He who is now in authority and rules all, that is, the Roman Empire

Trapp:

viz. The Roman empire, which had its rise, reign, and ruin, whereupon the popedom was founded, and grew to that excessive greatness, that it laboured with nothing more than with the weightiness of itself.

That is, the Roman emperor have removed his seat to Constantinople, that Rome may become the nest of Antichrist

Poole:

1. It was something that the apostle thought not safe openly to declare in writing; else he would not have written of it so obscurely.
2. It was both a thing, and a person; a thing, to katecon, in this verse, that which withholdeth; and a person, as in the next verse, o katecwn, he who letteth.

the power that was in the Roman emperor, whether heathen or Christian, must be taken out of the way to make room for the exaltation of this man of sin.

Gill:

by that which withheld, let or hindered the open appearance of antichrist, were the Roman empire and emperors; these stood in his way, and while this empire lasted, and the emperors wore the imperial crown, and sat on the throne, and held the government in their hands, the popes could not come at the height of their ambition, dignity, and authority, nor shine in their glory

the reason why the apostle expresses this not in plain words, but in an obscure manner, and with so much caution, was, that he might not offend the Roman emperors, and provoke them to a severe persecution of them as seditious persons, that sought the destruction of the empire: the word here used, which is rendered "withholdeth", or "letteth", as in the next verse, signifies a ruler or governor, and answers to the Hebrew word עָצַר, "to keep back, or restrain"; and which is used of kings, who by their laws and government restrain and withhold people from doing what they would; see 1Sa\_9:17 to which the apostle, who well understood the Hebrew language, doubtless had reference

that is, the Roman empire and Roman emperors, and which were by degrees entirely removed, and so made way for the revelation of this wicked one: and which was done partly by Constantine the emperor receiving the Christian faith, whereby the Roman empire as Pagan ceased; and by increasing the riches of the church, and feeding the pride, ambition, and covetousness of the bishops, especially the bishop of Rome; and next by removing the seat of the empire from Rome to Byzantium,



which he called Constantinople: here the Greek emperors continued in succession, and neither they themselves, nor even their exarchs, resided at Rome, but at Ravenna; so that way was made for antichrist to come to his seat, and there was nothing to rival and eclipse the grandeur, power, and glory of the Roman popes: and that which let was also taken out of the way, by the division of the empire, by Theodosius, giving to his elder son Arcadius, the eastern, and to the younger, Honorius, the western parts of it: the eastern empire was in process of time seized upon and possessed by Mahomet and the Saracens; and the western empire was overrun by the Goths, Vandals, and Huns, and became extinct about the year 476, in Augustulus, the last of the Roman emperors, who was obliged to abdicate the government by Odoacer king of the Heruli; when the kingdom of the Lombards took place in Italy, and afterwards that was translated to Charles the great, king of the French; so that there was nothing more of the Roman empire remaining than the bare name, as at this day; and by this means the popes of Rome got to the height of their power and glory, which is meant by the revelation of the man of sin.

Barnes:

The supposition that there was even then a tendency to concentrate all ecclesiastical power at Rome, and that while the civil authority remained there it would not suffer ecclesiastical power to grow to the exorbitant height which it ultimately reached, will meet all that is implied in the language

JFB:

Romanism, as a forerunner of Antichrist, was thus kept in check by the Roman emperor (the then representative of the coercive power) until Constantine, having removed the seat of empire to Constantinople, the Roman bishop by degrees first raised himself to precedence, then to primacy, and then to sole empire above the secular power.

Ellicott:

But seeing that he says this of the Roman empire, he naturally put it enigmatically and very obscurely, for he had no wish to subject himself to unnecessary hostilities and unprofitable perils. For had he said that shortly after the Roman empire would be dissolved, they would soon have transfixed him for a miscreant, and all the believers with him, as living and fighting for this end.”

Spurgeon:

There were certain reasons why that gigantic iniquity should begin to be developed even while the Roman Empire was in power to keep it in check;

and when that passed away, there was the opportunity for “the mystery of iniquity” to become the despot of the world.

B.H. Carroll

My own opinion is that this apostasy began to take definite form in the second and third centuries, and later ripened into the papacy and culminated in the Pope in 1870. So we ourselves have a view of the apostasy, already prolonged more than 1,000 years, and we are not to the end of it yet. We see the simplicity of the gospel changed, the engrafting of that simple gospel all of the types and shadows of the Old Testament, and mixing them with many heathen legends and customs, the union of church and state, the power organization called the scarlet woman seated upon the beast of seven heads, making herself drunk with the blood of the saints that she had slain. Nor has that apostasy yet reached its full fruition.