

**While I'm Waiting
(Week 15)
2 Thessalonians 2:1-8
Revelation 6:1-7
"The Restrainer"**

Introduction

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him: We ask you, brothers and sisters, not to be easily upset or troubled, either by a prophecy or by a message or by a letter supposedly from us, alleging that the day of the Lord has come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way. For that day will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he sits in God's temple, proclaiming that he himself is God. Don't you remember that when I was still with you I used to tell you about this? And you know what currently restrains him, so that he will be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but the one now restraining will do so until He is out of the way, and then the lawless one will be revealed. The Lord Jesus will destroy him with the breath of his mouth and will bring him to nothing at the appearance of his coming. **2 Thessalonians 2:1-8**

As we continue our study of *2 Thessalonians*, we can see that the church there had been given some bad information by false teachers. This was nothing new to Paul, for he had fought against this his entire ministry. It seemed that everywhere he went, there were those who would come along behind him and try to undo all that he had taught. The Thessalonians had received a letter claiming to be from the apostles, saying Paul had been mistaken in his previous teaching, and that the day of The LORD actually had already arrived. They were, therefore, terrified that they had missed the "parousia" (presence, or rapture of the Church) and were afraid.

While there is, in fact, a day coming when the wrath of God will be poured out upon this wicked world, it is imperative to understand that Paul was speaking of two separate events in this passage. The "coming" of Christ that he mentions in verse one is the rapture of the church which will immediately be followed by the Day of The LORD which is the tribulation. The rapture is an instantaneous moment in time, but the Day of The LORD is actually more than just a day, it is a seven year period that all the earth shall be subjected to God's wrath. It will be the worst period of time in human history. Many will perish, but as a result of it, the remnant of Israel will turn to Christ and be saved.

How awful that day will be! There will be no other like it! It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it. **Jeremiah 30:7**

You see, there will be a time when Satan is let loose upon this earth to do his worst. Mankind will be given over completely to the evil that is already within them. And God will pour out His wrath in such a way that men shall either repent or face destruction. The "Day of The LORD", also known as "The Tribulation", will come upon the earth, and there will be no place left to hide from it. Most of us would agree that things are bad in our world right now, but believe it or not, the worst is yet to come, and were it not for "**He Who restrains**" (**vs. 7**) this great evil, we would see it now. But there is a "**Restrainer**", Who is holding back the very worst of it until it is time for it to be revealed.

Mankind is completely depraved apart from God, and one day God will leave them to their own depravity. And when that happens, what we have witnessed in our world up to this point will pale in comparison to the wickedness that is to come. Even now, there are "prevailing spirits" that are straining to be released upon this earth, and when that day comes, all will see what fallen humanity is truly capable of becoming. Things will be so terrible that the world will look for a ruler to ease their suffering. But rather than turn to The Prince of Peace, they will surrender themselves to the Antichrist, the man of lawlessness. This world ruler will be possessed by the spirit of Satan himself. And while he will seem as one coming to

usher in a time of peace and prosperity with miraculous signs and wonders, he will, in reality, bring upon the earth a reign of conquest, slaughter, famine, and plague.

Paul wanted the Thessalonians to understand that there was no possible way that they were living in The Tribulation, because the Antichrist had not yet been revealed. The Day of the LORD cannot possibly come until the Antichrist assumes power. And he was then, and is still today, being restrained from doing so. He will assume the throne only when the proper time has come, and God allows his reign of terror to begin.

For you see, the **“Restrainer”** that holds back all this evil is none other than The Holy Spirit, and there is a day coming when He will leave this world to its own devices. When The Restrainer is taken out of the way, all hell will indeed break loose upon the earth. This time of tribulation will begin on the day when the rapture removes the Church of Jesus Christ from this wicked world.

Today, I would like to have us just take a small “peek” at the things that shall come when The Tribulation period begins, when Christ first begins to remove the **“seals from the scroll”** (**Revelation 6:1-7**), and the “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” begin to ride down upon the earth. Oh, there will be much more terrible suffering to follow after them, but they give us just a glimpse of what would happen right now were it not for the restraining hand of The Spirit of God. If you think that this world is bad now, just imagine what it will be like, when there is no Church and no Spirit of God left here to influence the hearts of wicked men. When we look at our world today, we can see the Four Horsemen saddling up to ride. The time is at hand. Where will you be, when the Day of The LORD is revealed?

First Horseman: World Wide Conquest

In the **Fifth Chapter of Revelation**, we are made witness to an incredible scene taking place in heaven. A scroll is brought before the throne of God, and a question reverberates through its courts:

“...’Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?’”

Revelation 5:2b

The Apostle John stands there in horror as it seems that no one is deemed worthy of such a privilege. He begins to weep uncontrollably, until one of the elders leaves his post surrounding the throne to comfort him and tell him that there is indeed One Who is worthy to open the scroll. He is The Lion from the tribe of Judah, The Root of David. John looks again, no doubt expecting to see a mighty lion, but instead sees a lamb that had been slain. It is the risen Christ, The One and Only Begotten Son of God. He alone is worthy to open the scroll. A scroll of this description can only be one thing in those days. It is a title deed. This scroll represents the inheritance of Christ, then meekest of them all. His inheritance? The Earth.

A little while, and the wicked person will be no more; though you look for him, he will not be there. But the humble will inherit the land and will enjoy abundant prosperity.

Psalms 37:10-11

Christ will one day step forward to take what is rightfully His. And when that day comes, man’s wickedness will have reached its zenith, and God’s judgement will fall like the blows of a mighty hammer. As Christ begins to open the seals, that dreadful “Day of The LORD” begins. It starts with the wickedness of men being fully unleashed, as the four horseman begin to ride roughshod upon the earth.

Then I saw the Lamb open one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, “Come!” I looked, and there was a white horse. Its rider held a bow; a crown was given to him, and he went out as a conqueror in order to conquer.

Revelation 6:1-2

For some reason, many have tried to assign an “identity” to the rider of the white horse. Some have tried to claim that it is Christ, since He appears on a white horse in **Revelation 19**. But this rider in **Chapter 6** is most definitely not Christ. It is Christ, Who is opening the seals of the scroll. Others have tried to say that the rider is the Antichrist. I used to subscribe to this theory as well. But a close examination of the other three horsemen shows us that rather than actual persons, they are the

personification of things that are to come. The white horseman, therefore, is the personification of world conquest. He *represents* the prevailing desire of the wicked to have dominion over all the earth.

We see this desire all around us today. The world is clamoring for a “one world government”. Many would love to see the nations stripped of their borders and a central government to rule over us all as one people. Many in our time are clamoring for such a system. They are mistakenly convinced that the world would be at peace, if only there were no more nationalism or national interests. It actually sounds enticing doesn't it? The whole world on the same page, as it were, but those who are longing for this have forgotten one monumental reality... the depravity of man. It doesn't matter if we have one nation, or a million, mankind will always have the desire to dominate one another. There can be no peace apart from “The Prince of Peace”. The world refuses to accept that only Christ can bring us together into one kingdom. The Antichrist will give it a shot during the Tribulation, but he will fail miserably.

When The “**Restrainer**” is removed (at the rapture), then the world will get exactly what it wants. One government to dominate the earth. They will turn to the Antichrist to usher them into a time of peace and prosperity. The nations will place their complete faith in him. His charisma and powerful speeches will sway the masses, and eventually, lure them to their own demise. Much like Hitler was able to do in Nazi Germany, this “beast” will arise and cause the whole world to follow after him. He will even deceive the nation of Israel into thinking he is on their side as well. He will do what no one else has been able to accomplish, bring peace to the middle east. But it will be a false peace, based upon deception. At the middle of the seven year Tribulation period, he will reveal his true evil nature and set up an image of himself to be worshipped in the reconstructed Temple in Jerusalem, and then, the Jews will see him, not as their savior, but as their destroyer (***Daniel 9:27, 12:11; Matthew 24:15-16***). He will, according to the prophet Zachariah, annihilate two thirds of the Jewish population (***Zechariah 13:8***).

So, the first part of the tribulation will begin with a peaceful conquest of the world on behalf of the Antichrist. The first horseman, as it were, will hand the power over to him in a bloodless takeover of the nations. For a short time, everyone is deceived into believing that it is the best of times. They will be deceived into thinking the stage is finally set for lasting peace and prosperity, until the next horseman rides into view, and those hopes are completely shattered.

Second Horseman: World Wide Slaughter

When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!” Then another horse went out, a fiery red one, and its rider was allowed to take peace from the earth, so that people would slaughter one another. And a large sword was given to him. **Revelation 6:3-4**

As the Antichrist's reign is established under a 10 nation confederacy, others will lead a revolt against him.

He will deal with the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god. He will greatly honor those who acknowledge him, making them rulers over many and distributing land as a reward. “At the time of the end, the king of the South will engage him in battle, but the king of the North will storm against him with chariots, horsemen, and many ships. He will invade countries and sweep through them like a flood. **Daniel 11:40**

The very nature of mankind is bent upon slaughter. As I am writing this, I cannot help but think of all the mass shootings that have been taking place in our country as of late. A hundred years ago, no one could have ever imagined such bloodlust. What kind of person derives pleasure in the slaughter of innocents? Answer: someone who is depraved and devoid of the Spirit of God. Imagine how it will be upon this earth, when there is no Spirit of God to strive with men. We think that things are horrible now, just wait until The Restrainer has been removed!

The “world peace” that so many claim they desire above all else will be shattered shortly after the Antichrist assumes the throne. This is a man under the demonic influence of Satan himself, and do not believe for a moment that there will be a shred of good in him. He will be a brutal dictator. Much like Adolf Hitler convinced the world that he was a man of peace, right up until he began to invade his

neighbors, the antichrist will deceive many with hopes of false peace. Just think of how it will be, when the Antichrist is finally allowed to have his will upon the earth. Jesus describe the chaos in **Matthew 24:**

You are going to hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, because these things must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. **Matthew 24:6-7a**

Many falsely believed that the world wars of the twentieth century were the “wars to end all wars”. But sadly, these horrific conflicts were nothing compared to the wholesale slaughter that will accompany the second horseman upon the fiery red horse. The world will see savagery, the likes of which has never been seen before. The Restrainer has stepped away, and the children of men are fighting with a complete lack of conscience, morality, or regard for human life.

I can only imagine the fury that will arise within the Muslim world, when the Antichrist tears down their sacred "Dome of the Rock", that currently stands upon the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. In order for him to rebuild the Temple, he must first demolish this structure, and this will enrage those of the Muslim faith. There will be world war and slaughter on an unprecedented scale.

As we look about at our own country today, we see division like we have never before witnessed. Many believe that we are on the verge of a second civil war in America. It would seem that we are certainly on course for armed conflict. Were it not for the presence of The Restrainer in our midst, we would most certainly already be there. Imagine what it will be like when He is removed. When the influence of His Church is no longer a force for morality. Abortion, Euthanasia, and mass murder are but a few of the champions for the devaluation of human life. Imagine how bad this will become, when the restraints are removed. We are living in a world filled with the violent birth pangs of the evil that is to be unleashed, when the seals of the scroll are opened. Thanks be to God that those of us who are in Christ shall be removed, when The Restrainer is taken away. For you see, He indwells His chosen people, and when He is gone, so are they! And when that occurs, the horseman of slaughter is coming to the world, and in the wake of his devastation, worldwide starvation.

Third Horseman: World Wide Famine

When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” And I looked, and there was a black horse. Its rider held a set of scales in his hand. Then I heard something like a voice among the four living creatures say, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, but do not harm the oil and the wine.” **Revelation 6:5-6**

The world war in the time of Antichrist will produce famine on a scale never before seen in the entire world. We hear of severe famine today in various regions of the world. Places like Africa and India are no stranger to hunger, but this time, it will be the entire world that suffers from depravation. In John's day a denarius was a days wage. What the passage is saying is that a man will work all day just to be able to provide the food needed for that day. His entire wage will buy enough wheat to feed himself, or if he has a family, he can feed three people with barely, an inferior and cheaper grain, with that same day's wages. In short, people will barely survive. The reign of peace and prosperity that was promised to accompany the Antichrist's rise to power will prove to be a lie.

Some will in fact prosper for a time under his rule. The oil and the wine, luxuries of the wealthy, will continue to flow for those in the upper class of this world. So much for the promise of “socialism” that this modern age seems to long for. The rich will get richer, and the poor will get poorer. Only in the kingdom of heaven will every person be treated with equality, for our inheritance is that of Christ Himself! The righteous will never be forsaken, nor their children be seen begging for bread (**Psalms 37:25**).

Jesus also spoke of the worldwide famine and upheaval that would precede His return.

There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these events are the beginning of labor pains. **Matthew 24:7b-8**

The whole world will literally be shaken with violent earthquakes and mass starvation. This is the ultimate result of a world deprived of the restraining hand of The Holy Spirit. And, there is yet another horseman waiting to be released.

Fourth Horseman: World Wide Plague

When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" And I looked, and there was a pale green horse. Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following after him. They were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill by the sword, by famine, by plague, and by the wild animals of the earth. **Revelation 6:7-8**

The color of the fourth horse, translated *green* (CSB) and *pale* (KJV), is "*chloros*" in the Greek, and it represents the pale greenish pallor of death. Between the wars, famine, and finally, pestilence that overcomes the world as a result of the Antichrist's rule of terror, a fourth of the world's population will die. Think about that for a moment... a fourth of the people! There has never been anything like this since the great flood. And even then, the world population wasn't what it is today. Based upon current statistics, this would mean that out of the the worlds population of around 7.6 billion people, almost 2 billion people will lay dead shortly after the Tribulation begins. There is inconceivable that this many corpses could be properly buried. The stench and disease that would accompany the subsequent decomposition of that many deceased people would be indescribable. It will be time of great horror upon the earth.

Notice the pale horse brings not only death from the war and from the famine, but from devastating plagues. And a part of these diseases are attributed to "the wild animals of the earth". In the fourteenth century, the Bubonic plague, otherwise know as the "black death", swept though Europe, Asia, and Africa killing an estimated 50 million people before it was done. As it turned out, this plague was transferred to humans by infected fleas from rats and other small animals. Millions of people were killed by a disease that first began in wild animals.

Today, our world is facing the challenges of yet another disease that has "jumped off" from animals (namely bats) to human beings. At the time of this writing, COVID-19, a novel virus with its flu-like respiratory symptoms, has infected over millions people and has claimed the lives of many, and the numbers continue to rise. These things are just mere foreshadowings of the horror that will come upon the world in the Great Tribulation Period. Every day we witness man's desire for conquest, his thirst for slaughter, along with the starvation and disease that preys upon humankind. But these things that we have witnessed with our own eyes will pale in comparison to the things that are to come, when God withdraws His Spirit from this fallen world.

There are many today that long to see the Church and its teachings removed from the earth. One day soon, their hearts desire will be granted, and they will witness firsthand the hell on earth, that is separation from the Spirit of The Living God. The time is drawing near. The birth pangs have already begun. What have you done with Christ? For this is all that will matter in those days. I believe that the time of His return is soon at hand. The world is ripe for destruction, and the horsemen are waiting at the gate. And they represent only the "**beginning of sorrows**". For after their arrival there are three more seals to be opened, and within the seventh seal, there are seven trumpets of judgment and seven bowls of God's wrath to be poured out upon the earth. It shall be the great and terrible Day of The LORD, and no one will be able to withstand, unless they will surrender themselves over to The LORD Jesus. He is the Great Stone that will come and shatter the kingdom of the Antichrist. The times of the Gentiles will end, and His eternal kingdom shall fill the earth. Are you ready? We need only to look around to see the horses of the apocalypse are now chomping at the bit, longing to be loosed upon this earth. The Restrainer is preparing to take away His hand. Will you be ready to survive the coming night? Surrender yourself over to Christ, while there is still time.

He Who testifies about these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen! Come, Lord Jesus! **Revelation 22:20**

And let all of His redeemed, His chosen people, say... TRUTH!!