

02.14.21

Revelation

Chapter 14 - Revealing the Consequence of Choice Declared Ripe for Wrath (vs. 17-20)

Revelation 14:17-20: And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe." So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

We come into these passages, and when you're dealing with the wrath of God, it's hard not to perceive Him as

being harsh and cruel. It has a resonating tone of the Old Testament. And because we, in our own perception, see man is benevolent and God is cruel, we almost immediately put Him in that role. When we come to this passage, we've already looked at the harvesting of what we would perceive to be the first fruits or the wheat, and the gathering together of God's people. This passage is dealing with the grapes that are being crushed and as we oftentimes use the phrase, "the grapes of wrath of God." So, the first seemed to be a harvesting of those that were His. The second seems to be a giving of what those that had sowed on the earth of their selfish, and certainly, worldly desires have now come to fruition and now is ripe for the harvest. It's an interesting picture because it is done not by, as you saw the first text, the one like the Son of Man wearing a crown, but this is done by the angel which would picture us in the realm of the law as angels were guardians of the law. As they begin to reap the harvest, it is intense. It's clear that the grapes are ripe in verse 18, as you come to the end of that. And it's also clear that the reason why the harvest has come is because of the ripening. As you come to the end of the

passage, it is very clear that when you're dealing with the grapes being crushed, you're dealing with blood because it actually describes that in verse 20. So, there's no confusion about any of those things.

The question is, what exactly is this reaping? How is it being done? And how is God's wrath being displayed in this? When we come to this passage, we see this sharp sickle. We see right from the beginning, the fact that the earth has to be reaped by virtue of, if you look with me at the beginning in verse 17,

(Revelation 14:17) “And another angel came out of the temple...”

The first angel with the beginning of gathering together the saints was coming out of the temple. This one is also coming out of the temple. What is he saying? Well, the best way I could put it would be 2 Thessalonians, if you look with me, in 2 Thessalonians 1, as the description seems to be that many of God's people were being mistreated and abused, and God, through Paul, begins to encourage them and says, “God sees this and He’s not going to let it go.”

The text reads this way in verse 4,

(2 Thessalonians 1:4) “therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.

(2 Thessalonians 1:5) This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.

(2 Thessalonians 1:6) For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,

(2 Thessalonians 1:7) and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,

(2 Thessalonians 1:8) dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

(2 Thessalonians 1:9) These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”

What we believe is coming out of the temple, of course, as you see within the passage in verse 6,

“For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you.”

This is one of the reasons why the angel is coming out, we know, representing the law to all those that have decided to go by their own righteousness in defiance to God. And so, those on the earth at this juncture have said, “We make our own law,” and the angels go, “But you broke His.” And you see this interesting picture. Of course, the law says, “An eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth. You afflicted them; you're going to be afflicted as well.” And so, the angels are coming out of the temple declaring this by virtue of their love for the brethren and for those that worship God.

The line has been drawn, if you remember, He had them draw the line at the very beginning of Revelation 11.

He says,

(Revelation 11:1) “Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, “Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it.”

So, what's coming out of the temple of God? Obviously, those who worship Him. And God is declaring justice on their behalf as the angel is coming out.

The passage then goes on to make reference to the fact that the grapes are being harvested, and the sharp sickle is going on.

(Revelation 14:18) “Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, “Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe.”

The ripeness of the grapes actually seems to be the reason why this is the time of the harvesting.

There's a number of passages in Scripture that make reference to this. If you go all the way back to Genesis 6

with me, and we go back to the time in which man left to himself was certainly not following God or obeying God; your thoughts are, “Well, if man has freedom, he would follow God every time.” If you pick up with me in Genesis 6, it basically reads the condition of the world when man is left to make his own decisions and goes his own way.

(Genesis 6:1) “Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them,

(Genesis 6:2) that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.”

Now, The differentiation between “sons of God” and “daughters of men,” I don't want to go into a lot of discussion, debate about this, but clearly from my understanding as we look at this, God is talking about those that were following Him and those that were following the world, and there was a difference, but they began to co-mingle. Paul reminds us, “Don't be deceived; bad company corrupts good morals.” And this was one of the things that continued to bring the demise of Israel,

even in the sense that Balaam was trying to get the failure of Israel. He couldn't get it by a curse upon the land but what he could do was get them to intermarry. And then the false gods would come into the realm of Israel, and that became the demise of Israel. So, the text is making reference to the fact that bad company corrupts good morals. And there were those that had been following God but now would ultimately change.

And if you look within the passage, it says,

(Genesis 6:3) “Then the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever...”

So, we know He's talking about man. Here again, I don't want to debate the text too much.

“... because he also is flesh...”

Obviously, we're talking about man.

“... nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”

The point is, God is saying, “I'll give him 120 years.” Now, I don't know how long it took for Noah to build the ark, but 120 years would give him enough time to do it. And God

has given the warning. He's not saying this is how long man's going to live, because Methuselah's going to live 969 years. Man will live less, and after the flood, well, Abraham will live 175. But He's not saying this is the years of man in the text. What He's saying is, you have 120 years, which I think is plenty of time to get right, don't you? Yeah. I mean, Enoch had already been walking with God 365 years and was taken up. I mean, that alone would tell you, okay, maybe we should be listening to Enoch, because Jude tells us that Enoch had been warning about the judgment of God. So, we know that judgment was being proclaimed not only Enoch, but Noah's building an ark. So, you have a visual. Is God going to judge? Why is He building that big boat? It has something to do with judgment.

It says,

(Genesis 6:4) “The Nephilim (great men) were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.”

Of course, they were living long when you consider... I mean, when's the last time you heard somebody living over 900 years?

(Genesis 6:5) “Then the LORD saw...”

I mean, you always thought people get wiser the older they get. Over 900 years, they're not smarter.

The passage reads,

“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

How do you know that grapes are ripe? To me, the wonder is that God would allow it to go that far. People say, “Oh, God's so mean. God's so mean.” Okay, let's just hypothetically, what if the thought of man, every intent of his thought, was evil only and he never let up on it?

Never. He never had one good thought in his pea-picking brain. Not one. What if that were true? Well, then it's time for God to come. And the graciousness of God to preserve eight before they're gone on the face of the earth. Because you can figure if everybody on the face of

the earth, their thought is only destructive, then what do you think they're thinking about Noah and his family? They're not going to live. That's an amazing thought. When you consider God warning Abraham and going, and of course, Lot's in Sodom, and God has this interesting discussion with Abraham, and Abraham goes,

“Say there's 50 in Sodom and Gomorrah, would You destroy Sodom and Gomorrah if there's 50?”

“No, if there's 50 in Sodom and Gomorrah, I won't destroy it.”

“How about 45?” Going increments of 5.

“How about 45?”

“No.”

“40?” We're still on the 5 numbers. And then he goes,

“How about 30?” Jumps in the 10s. Now, he's going in increments of 10.

“No, if there's 30, I will not.”

“What about 20?”

“No, if there's 20, I will not.”

“10. If there are 10?”

Now, once you think, there's Lot. His wife, his 2 daughters, and their 2 fiancés. That's 6. The fiancés don't go with them. But 10... There wasn't even 10. And quite frankly, the 4 that are saved, Lot, his wife, and 2 daughters, only Lot was a facsimile of godly. The daughters were incestuous, and the wife turned back with her love for the city. But God is saving the 4 in the midst of all this. We think in terms of, “God's so cruel and how could He do this?” Well, when it says the grapes are ripe, this is what it's saying. God has taken it to the full limit and now what's raining on the earth? What is permeating the earth? How strong is the hatred? He goes, “It can't go on. It has to stop.” In fact, as you read in Matthew 24, Scripture says, had He not cut the day short, even the elect would have been destroyed. Had He not said, “It's time to harvest the grapes.” So, you begin to realize when this is being written that God has taken us to the fruition of the crop. And it is a reminder, as we are reminded in the passage, it puts us into the agriculture, it puts us into the horticulture of the world, you begin to realize that

once again, whatever you sow, you will also reap. I mean, we read that all the time in Galatians 6:7.

The way it reads, if I remember right, is,

(Galatians 6:7) “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked...”

Do you ever wonder why it kind of throws in that? That's a strange word. It comes from a word, and the word is actually in it, “moo”. You're right, that's what cows do. it actually comes from a cow mooing. And the picture is a cow perhaps being a little bit upset about being pushed around, and so it turns its head upwards and it moos at you. And so, I guess you could literally put in here, “God is not mooed at.” But that's what He's saying within the passage. The perception is that we oftentimes don't like the way God sees things. And so, we tell Him that we're going to do things our way, and “You can't push me around.” And God says, “Okay, but just understand if I told you to do something, it's a way that will save you. I mean, you can “moo” at Me all you want to, but what I'm saying is, it's going to hurt you because,” as he goes into the text,

“... whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.”

So, do your little turning up your nose, whatever you want to do, but it's going to happen. And we realize that no matter what we do, the choices that we make, as we've been talking about, you're planting seeds. And you're either planting seeds of a harvest of the grain coming in and the great rejoicing, or you're planting seeds of the grapes of the wrath that are stored. Now, what's interesting is that the analogy and the contrast within the passage is the grains of wheat, which we talked about, and how you could tell the wheat from the tares is that the grain of wheat were the heads bowed. And God reveals to the humble and He pulls them in.

But as you come to the grapes, it stands for something. And when you're in the text, it's sort of like the passage we were looking at in John 6, where Jesus says, "You need to eat My flesh and drink My blood." You first start reading it, and you go, "Okay, that's very offensive. You know, we're into cannibalism here." And Jesus goes, "Trust Me on this one. I wouldn't have you do that." But He's teaching us something. You begin to read this, and you go, "The wrath of God, and wow."

(Revelation 14:20) “And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses’ bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.”

I mean, that's horrific. I mean, talk about overkill. I mean, that's what it seems like. But you have to put it in the context. The context is, you sowed the grapes. So, the wrath that's coming upon you is what **you** did. God's been telling you, come to Him, all who are weary and heavy laden, He'll give them rest. Christ says, “I didn't come to judge the world, I came to save you. Come to Me.” “Oh, I don't think I need to come to Him. Besides that Jesus thing, that's so stupid.” Okay, so you turn your nose up on it. Just understand that you just planted something. And quite frankly, you just planted yourself in the ground. Because what's going to happen is these grapes are going to reveal themselves.

Now, here's the point. The grapes throughout Scripture, and I thought about pulling through all the passages that there are, and there are quite a few of them, make reference to oftentimes as causing a drunkenness. And

Isaiah talks about Ephraim and how he becomes drunk with wine and so much so that he's throwing up and everything like that. It's an interesting picture because by the time you come to Ephesians 5, he says, "I want you to know what the will of the Lord is. Don't be drunk with wine, for that is dissipation." And so, he puts the context in that dissipation or waste of a life is somebody just going for pleasure. That's all they're thinking. Of course, basically Epicureans, "Let's avoid pain and let's embrace pleasure." So, they live for that. The only problem is, they find a lot of pain in their endeavor to embrace pleasure because what it creates is all kinds of mayhem.

Selfishness always breeds hurt. I mean, you show me a person that's selfish and hoarding, you basically have a scrooge that is thinking about nobody but themselves. They're isolating themselves from every kind of relationship. But the problem is, they become drunk with this, that this kind of pride is intoxicating. When the world goes out there and they show these wonderful pictures of how happy you are if you're driving a \$200,000 Ferrari or something like that with the wind blowing in your hair, you don't even think of, "I'm going to have to take those

tangles out.” You don't think about those things. (Some of the guys don't even have to worry about that.) But the problem is, all the problems that come from that selfishness and that lifestyle and the hurt and the pain that come out of that, and finally you find yourself alone. But not only that, you find yourself oppressive towards other people, hurtful towards other people. You see people as objects to use to get money. And so, there is no concern for relationships, and there's loneliness and hurt and pain and sorrow. And this is why Paul writes in 1 Timothy 6, he says, “Look, I want you to understand this, that the love of money,” it doesn't say money, but he says, “the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, or more specifically hurt, pain, sorrow.” He says, “And some by longing for it have thrust themselves into a lot of hurt because that's what they've got after.” The picture is that going after your own desires is intoxicating. Throughout the Word, God sort of puts these two and aligns them. And He says there's an intoxication, this hunger for pleasure. And He says it draws you in. And before long, you're kind of drunk with the power and the position. Of course, we use the phrase, “absolute power corrupts”. So,

the point is that you're taken in by a spirit. That's why they call them "spirits," by the way. You're taken in by a spirit that is controlling you. And so, now if you expand this picture, the cities of the world become that picture of pleasure beckoning you. And in the text, that city will be called a harlot. Now, why are the cities of the earth referred to as "harlot," because they're beckoning you to trust in them, not in God. You were meant to have the relationship with God. The world is telling you, "Have a relationship with me," but it's just going to use you. See, God loves you. He died for you. He's going to be with you forever. "I will never leave you nor forsake you." But the world will use you and spit you out and say, "Next?" And that's the picture.

So, as you look in Chapter 14, and He's already kind of established this, but if you back up with me in verse 8, remember when the angel declared, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon"? I want you to read the way that it's worded here.

Read with me in the passage,

(Revelation 14:8) “And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she...”

I.e. the city, which Babylon has become the city of the world. Why is that true? Once again, go all the way back to the beginning in Genesis. Where did it all begin? The tower of Babel. So, it all began with a tower of confusion in which man defied God and said, “I'm going to go against God.” Well, that becomes the ultimate picture of the world. The world is saying, “You don't need God. You got us. We're going to take care of you.” Of course, they're not taking care of us very well.

But it says,

“... “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.””

What's the wine? See, it's the alluring of all those things of the world.

I mean, there are a number of passages I can show you, but if you look in Chapter 16, he makes reference to it again,

(Revelation 16:19) “The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.”

Why is she receiving the cup? Because that's what she gave. He's giving her, her wine. This is what you need to understand.

So, you go into Chapter 18, and if you just pick up with me, once again we see repeated again in verse 2,

(Revelation 18:2) “And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird.

(Revelation 18:3) For all the nations...”

So, we're not just talking about one city, are we?

“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...”

I.e. put their trust in the city and the commerce and the things. We know that he's talking about commerce because he talks about, verse 11, the merchants of the earth. He talks about the commerce of the costly goods and everything. We know what he's talking about. When Scripture says, “Love not the world, neither the things in the world,” what it's saying is, “Don't have a love affair with the world, with Me. You're Mine.” See, that's adultery, that's harlotry. And the world is calling out. And so, what the world does is it use the things in the world to allure you. I'll put it another way. The world says, “Look, shiny.” And we go, “I'll take 2.”

So, it says,

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

We've fallen in love with luxury. Be careful. It's okay to have a new car. Just don't love the new car. I always tell

my kids, “When you go buy a car, don't fall in love with it. You fall in love with it; you're going to pay whatever they ask. You've got to be willing to walk off and go, ‘I'll get another one.’” That's one thing a car dealer can't deal with. He goes, “You don't love the car?” “No, not really.” He has no place to go. Okay, that didn't cost you anything, so I just...

But within the passage, it's telling us in verse 4, Revelation 18:4) “I heard another voice from heaven, saying, ‘Come out of her...’”

“Get out of there.” And you can almost see the harvesting of God pulling out His people.

“... Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues.”

Because the things that are coming upon her, if you look in verse 6,

(Revelation 18:6) “Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her.”

Now, if you understand verse 7, He goes, “This is all about her glorifying herself, saying she's great.”

And once again,

(Revelation 18:9) “And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality...”

And they look at a distance, and they see Babylon being destroyed. Well, this is the wrath of God. This is the grapes that are being crushed. So, the city, if you remember, the angels coming out from the fire. So, it's kind of mixing the two.

And it says,

(Revelation 18:11) “And the merchants of the earth weep...”

(Revelation 18:12) “cargoes of gold and silver...”

(Revelation 18:13) “and cinnamon and spice...”

(Revelation 18:15) “The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning,

(Revelation 18:16) saying, ‘Woe, woe...’”

What is He talking about? All the things of the world that have allured you. So, what is happening? Well, what is happening is that God is bringing forth the wrath upon the world for which they have been sowing. One of the minor prophets, Amos, makes reference to the fact of, you know, you go around and you make other people drunk so that you can take advantage of them. You ever heard of people doing that before? Yeah, you see it in the movies all the time. You get somebody drunk so you can take advantage of them. He says, "That's what you're doing." He goes, "You come into the temple and you lean back and you start playing your songs and you start drinking from God's cup and it's just about pleasure with you. And you care less who you hurt, you care less about any kind of relationships. It's just about you and it's about taking, it's about giving. Do you understand the carnage that you're creating? Do you understand that? I mean, think in terms of an alcoholic or a drug addict. I've had mothers come up to me, and they go, "My son, I don't know why he did that." And I said, "You have to understand, an addict only has one thing on his head. The next fix. That's the only thing. He could care less about

you. Now, he'll woo you. He knows how to do that. But if somebody's truly an addict, the only thing they have in their mind is, "How can I get it?" It's the only thing they have in their head. I mean, we had addicts staying in our house and they were hiding drugs in the light sockets. We finally unscrewed the light sockets and found they had stashed some drugs in there. That's all they're thinking about. It's an all-consuming thought. The same thing is true with the way the world intoxicates us to such a degree, I mean, think about it. You're thinking about buying something new? Oh, your eyes are set on that? You've been thinking about Jesus? I'll tell you what you're going to find yourself doing. You're laying in bed and you're thinking about, "How am I going to get that? When am I going to get that?" And it just consumes your thoughts. And you become intoxicated by it. And some of your duties, some of your responsibilities, people around you, it becomes an all-consuming thing. And what Scripture is saying is it's become an all-consuming thing. Now, like I said, there's 1,001 passages I could look at with you, but the problem with becoming intoxicated is it also creates a sense of pride. The picture in Isaiah with

Ephraim, you become so arrogant about it. And you say, "I'm undefeatable. I can do anything." And you see with the Moabites and some of the other nations. But you become intoxicated with this pride. This becomes your demise. Now, your thought is that God is just stepping on people. That's the kind of picture you get. No, God's not stepping on them. They're killing themselves.

Romans 1 says the worst thing that could ever happen is for God to take His hands off. And in Revelation, it's exactly what He's doing. The wrath of God is stepping back. How do I know that? Well, Romans 1, it says, the wrath of God is against all men because they suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Okay, you know how it plays out in Romans 1? I'll tell you. You can read it.

Romans 1 says,

(Romans 1:21) "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

(Romans 1:22) Professing to be wise, they became fools,

(Romans 1:23) and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.”

And they said, “I’m god.”

Now, listen to the judgment of God.

(Romans 1:24) “Therefore...”

It says at least twice in the text,

“... God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity...”

God gave them over. The worst thing could happen.

What you're going to find in Revelation is God is turning evil loose. Man says, “I want evil, I want evil, I want evil.” He plants evil.

Hosea 10:13 reads this way,

“You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped (‘evil) injustice...”

Deviation, distortion, and problems. I mean, what did you think you were going to reap if you planted wickedness?

What did you think? What did you think was going to come out of that? He says, “You trusted in the abundance of strength, and you swallowed the lie whole. You ate it.”

Isaiah 41:29 says,

“... Their works are worthless, Their molten images are wind and emptiness.”

It says in Hosea 8:7,

“For they sow the wind And they reap the whirlwind...”

Job puts it this way in Job 4:8,

“... those who sow trouble harvest it.”

What did you think you were going to get when you sowed it?

Jeremiah puts it this way in Jeremiah 2:5,

“... That they went far from Me And walked after emptiness and became empty?”

I mean, Proverbs reminds us in Proverbs 13:25, that the wicked are never satisfied.

Proverbs 11:4- riches don't profit in the day of wrath.

Proverbs 11:28- he who trusts in riches will fall.

You trust in these things and then you find yourself in a hole and you wonder, "How did I get here?" He goes, "You trusted in a lie. What did you think?" So, in a way, everything that man trusts in besides God is trusting in... Well, I think the way that Jeremiah 10:3 says, "Don't trust in man's customs. They are a delusion." And he begins to delude himself. Now, this is the picture of wine. I mean, it beckons you. It begins to intoxicate, and before long it's controlling you, and you're seeing things, visions of grandeur, and you're looking in the mirror. And your perception is, "I'm invincible; there's nothing that can harm me." This is going to be the demise.

Now, if you go with me to Revelation, if you understand this, then you'll understand as we go a little bit further in Revelation 17, if you go there, that he gives these pictures. Remember, he showed the picture of the beast coming out of the waters. Of course, that was a picture of the beast coming out of the tumultuous world. Because man, humanity, i.e. waters, is very volatile and fickle. You haven't seen that? Okay, I've noticed that.

But it says in verse 15,

(Revelation 17:15) “And he said to me, “The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples...””

So, you know, this isn't Pastor Gary just figuring these things out. I'm not that smart.

“... where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.”

(Revelation 17:16) And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot...”

Who is the harlot? Well, we've already read Revelation 18. The harlot is the cities and all other beckonings of the world. Once again, that's why it says, “Love not the world, nor the things in the world.” It's a love affair with the world. And He says, “Be careful what you love, because whatever you love will draw you in. And before long, you not only become intoxicated with it, but you also won't be able to see clearly.” And I don't know if you understand this or not, but the evil one is trying to get us to love the world. Why? Because the evil one wants you to be rich? He wants you to be happy? He wants you to have a life that is carefree and full of pleasure? No. He wants you to get intoxicated so he can kill you. You can kill an

intoxicated person a lot easier than you can kill a person that's lucid. Let me put it another way. You know what makes America so vulnerable? We're so attached to our stuff. For somebody to take over America, all they have to do is turn off the spigot. That's all they have to do. They don't have to fire a bullet. I remember the gas wars. People were going ballistic. They were stockpiling in their backyard. They were literally making their backyard a bomb. Lines were being formed and people were hating each other. And that was over stupid gas. We're not talking over food. Can you imagine when you can't buy or sell without the mark of the beast, how vicious people are going to get? Can you imagine? It's going to be intense. The point is, if you love the things in the world, you are easily controllable. And what the evil one's going to do is he's going to make the world vulnerable "You need me." Computers are wonderful things, aren't they? There's a computer in almost everything. Imagine just pushing one button and shutting down all the computers. By the way, that would shut down your car. It would shut down everything. One stupid button. Can you imagine the control that has over people? Can you imagine the upset

that would be to people that have built their life around their stuff?

Read the text,

“... and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh...”

Who's destroying the harlot? The beast.

“... and will burn her up with fire.”

So, when you read in Revelation 18, and you see the smoke of the cities and all that's within the cities and the glory of the cities going up in smoke, who did it? The beast did it. He's a war machine. What does he want to do? He wants to destroy. What's the fastest way to destroy? I can tell you the fastest way to destroy people. Get them to fall in love with things that are superficial. They'll be really easy to destroy. But you take a people that love God with all their heart, with all their soul, you can't touch them. You can't touch them. They are invincible because of the power of God is upon them. And so, this particular passage is revealing the horrific thing that's going to happen. I mean, there's going to be a

tremendous war that's going to come. The reason why it shows it up to the horse's bridle is because the warriors are coming. It's a picture of the warriors coming. Who are the warriors going to be? It's going to be coming from the beast, from the warriors of the beast.

What's interesting is there's going to be a picture that's kind of painted. And at first, the woman is riding on this beast, and it looks like they're "two peas in a pod." It's sort of like the old story of the frog riding on the back of the alligator, "Just take me across," and the alligator goes, "Fine, no problem." So, the frog gets on the back, right? Do you think the frog makes it? This is the picture of the woman riding on the beast. The beast goes, "Yeah, fine. We're going to make you successful. You want money, right?" There's an interesting passage in Proverbs that says, you're with a rich man and you're getting ready to eat, put a knife to your throat. Because he didn't invite you there because he likes you. And it's an interesting picture of this powerful leadership that comes in. I mean, when you read the prophecy of one that we oftentimes refer to as the antichrist, or the lawless one, as

Thessalonians mentions, it says this, he will not love women, nor will he love money or pleasure. The only thing he will love is war. But in order to make people vulnerable, what is he going to get you to do? All you have to do is make a people soft. And if you get them to fall in love with the world...

So, as you come to this passage and you see the judgment, understand that there's a whole picture. And though he's making reference to the angels opening up the heaven's door and the sickle coming in, what He's releasing is the evil of this world. And the evil of this world is going to come. And what's going to destroy people in the end result? Their own greed. The very greed that they had, and they abused, and they took advantage of people by virtue of wanting more. Wanting more is the very thing that's going to come and destroy them. I mean, it's one of the things we were talking about in Micah. I mean, here you have Israel and their leaders were exploiting and using and abusing their own people. And God says, "Who do you think I'm going to send to destroy you?" The king of Assyria, who was very abusive, very

destructive, very cruel, very heartless, and that was going to be the result. The same thing is happening with this particular passage.

So, as we read in Revelation and we go through, He's going to be uncovering these things and He's going to be showing. And the warning is specifically to the church, which is saying, "Don't love these things." You say, "Well, God's just trying to keep me from having a good time." No, He says, "I created all these things for you to enjoy freely. But don't love them, because if you love them, it makes you vulnerable. And once you're vulnerable, the destroyer will destroy your life." And that's exactly where he's heading.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today, and we ask You to work in our hearts and help us to see the clarity of the picture. The day of wrath is coming and we have planted. The question is, what have we planted? Many of us are planting the seeds of greed, and many of us are planting the seeds of pleasure and self-aggrandizement, and we're

planting the seeds of selfishness. We're finding that we're hurting lives and already there's a reaping of sorrow and destruction. But the day is coming when God is going to say, "Enough. We'll turn them loose," and all of evil will destroy itself. It's only just for them to get what they have sowed. It is only right for the believer to reap what he has sowed. Don't be deceived; whatever a man sows, that's what will reap. And if you sow according to the flesh, if you sow according to the desires of the world, fasten your seatbelt. It's coming. But if you sow according to the Spirit, if you sow according to the heart, if you sow because you love God, can you imagine the wonder, the benefits eternal that you'll reap?