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Revelation

Chapter 11 - Revealing Religion's Hatred for the Light Severing Man from Beast (vs. 7-10)

Revelation 11:7-10: When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and celebrate; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

It's hard to believe that as we come to this passage that the place in which all of the events are happening is in

Jerusalem. That's hard to believe. Because the hostility that we're seeing, the hatred and the acrimony, the hostility towards these two prophets, is just hard to grasp. I mean, this is in the most religious city in the world. Why in the world would there be this kind of hatred towards these two prophets of God? It's bizarre. All the way through the Book of Revelation, I think, is interwoven, the distinction between religion and faith; what is real and what is not. And the church has been called to display the truth. We are the pillar and support of the truth, of that which is genuine, of that which is real. The very antithesis of that, of course, is oftentimes religion, as Jesus would repeat over and over again, and which we'll look at specifically in Matthew 23, hypocrites, wearing masks, facades, fakes, nothing genuine about it. And yet, in the halls of religion is a breeding ground of acting and the breeding ground of man boasting and intimidating others by virtue of his status.

So, when we look at church, what God is doing, in fact, at the very beginning of Chapter 11, we see the measuring line going out in which God is making a distinction

between the holy ones, those that are holy and worship Him and come to the place of sacrifice, and are willing to give of their lives for Him, and those that are outside, still in the temple courts, but those who are outside by virtue of their religion. And as we talked about, you see the ominous structures of religion. And if you think about it, basically religion focuses on appearance. It focuses on pomp. Paul will talk to the Corinthians in regard to this. He says, "You're looking at things as they are outwardly. You're looking at appearances. This is not about appearance. I know that outwardly I seem even weak, and my speech is even contemptible to you." And we believe that he had been so marred by his stoning and mistreatment that he was having a hard time even speaking, which would have been a turnoff to the Greeks who liked the ability to speak well. But nevertheless, he comes before them, and he says, "I come to you in weakness, so that your assurance would not rest on the strength of men, but on the power of God." But you realize that throughout, the tendency of man is to focus on the wrong things. And before long, not unlike the church at Laodicea, they were focusing on what they

possessed and their wealth. And they looked pretty popular, and a lot of people were going there. And they must be successful, right? He goes, “No, you're naked, you're blind, you're poor.” He says, “You're not anywhere close.” The church allows the infiltration of religion to come in and distort and twist our way of thinking so that we begin to focus on appearance, pomp, and large ominous structures to display who we are. And by virtue of our fancy clothing and our boasting of great deeds, which we love to put on the news and let people see about, we begin to perceive that we've done something significant. Now, nevertheless, Scripture is very clear, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. And when you give and when you serve God, do it to Him; do it for Him, not for anybody else. So, we see the counter distinctions that are being revealed as we go through Scripture.

And of course, Malachi, as we talked about last week, in particular Chapter 3, as you look at verses 16 through 18, He begins to reveal the distinction that He's going to make. And He says, “And thus the day is coming when I'm

going to make a distinction between the righteous and the wicked.” Now, you would think that distinction is obvious. It is not to most men. Because once again, we fed into the whole idea that which is really holy is that which is full of pomp and circumstance, which here again, couldn't be further from the truth. But the church feeds into this, and this is one of the great warnings. So, revelation is revealing things. And it's revealing, as we come to Chapter 11, that God makes distinctions. And He is looking for, as Malachi says, those who genuinely fear God instead of man. And, of course, Revelation, time of tribulation, is going to be revealing who you really believe.

In fact, if you look with me in Chapter 20 of Revelation, it talks about those that ultimately, coming out of the tribulation, will sit on the throne during the time of the millennium. We believe the millennium is in the text, a thousand-year reign.

And it says,

(Revelation 20:4) “Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the

souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God..."

Now, the point of the passage is that they were loyal even unto death, and that's what drew them. It was at the cross; it was at the place of sacrifice that drew them. And they were willing to give their lives for something. You see the genuineness of a heart. You don't see that in religion. And it's one of the reasons why religion so hates the truth. You get people preaching the truth strong enough and long enough, and you're going to watch, churches will start despising them. And the reason for that is that the truth is obviously very exposing to what they're doing, which is wrong, and it's revealing the light. And of course, as John says, the wicked hate the light. They resist the light because their deeds are evil, because they're looking for something else to embrace that is far grander. They want to put the garb of religion over it to make it look wonderful, but it is not.

So, as you come to the very beginning, what God is doing in verses 1 and 2 is He's making distinctions. The measuring line is given, and God is making a distinction

between that which is real and that which is fake and that which is love and that which is hate. And God is making distinction between love and legalism. And God is making a distinction between humility and pride. I mean, if you just look at the simplicity of religion, it's all about pride. If you look at the simplicity of our faith, it's all about humility. Nothing could be so different, and yet how they both seem to convey that they are followers of God. And so, the very first two verses are virtually that in which God is distinguishing.

And then the second passage, as we looked at verses 3 through 6, God is literally separating the difference between power and that which is rhetoric. And once again, religion likes to talk about stuff. It'll philosophize about stuff. It'll mull over things. But nothing ever really gets done. Nothing really ever changes. People don't really want their lives changed in religion. They just want to talk about it. And it's one of the things that is so bothering and disturbing when the truth is really proclaimed that they begin to resist. Why was Jesus so hated by religion? You have to ask yourself that. And the

reason is because when He spoke, power came. Things happened. So that when you look at our faith, and let me just simplify it for you- Romans 1:16 says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ because I know that is the power." Now, here again, we can talk and philosophize about helping people and about doing things. We can take up collections and we can go and sew clothing for people and do all kinds of wonderful, altruistic things. But what's the power that changes that person? What's the power that changes them? Well, according to Romans 1:16, the power of God to save that person. See, you can put clothes on them, but they're going to go back in the filth. You can put food in them, but they're still going to be hungry. But if in fact they come to the gospel, the gospel will save them from their sins. So, we believe in the power of the gospel.

If you look at 2 Corinthians 5, and you don't need to turn there, but verse 17, that the gospel has the power to literally change who a person is.

(2 Corinthians 5:17) “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”

Now, that's a major change when you think about it.

Now, here again, the church likes to talk about their counseling techniques. They like to talk about their abilities to somehow love people into the faith. But the fact of the matter is, the gospel changes them. If a person makes a genuine decision, they become a new creation. You go, “When?” Today. They become a new person today. Well, religion doesn't like talking about stuff like that because it puts a lot of people out of business. You have to stop writing all your books. You have to stop doing all your seminars because the gospel seems to have more power than what I can afford people. See? And it's one of the reasons why religion hates it.

I mean, you look at Jude 1:24, it tells us literally that the gospel is able to make you stand firm until the end; that your faith, your relationship with God is able to make you stand. That means that I don't have to make you stand. I can't make you stand. But I do believe the gospel is

powerful enough to make you stand firm unto the end and to actually keep you, as the text says, from stumbling. It'll keep you from stumbling. Because the spirit of truth is within you and the desire. See, one of the problems is that we're not preaching the gospel. We're giving people everything else but the gospel. And it's one of the reasons why people have become so hostile towards hearing that good news. It's strange why people would become hostile to hear good news. But we actually believe that the gospel is the power. We believe, according to Matthew 18:18, that the power has been given through the gospel to bind and to loose. That is to say, to bind sin and to loose us from the bondage of it. We believe that God can bind evil through the gospel. Once again, I know it sounds oversimplified, but we actually believe that's true. The problem is, I got an e-mail this past week of somebody that had been a part of the church and now is living down south, and they were saying, "You know, I'm trying to minister to this person. Different members of the family have died from brain tumors, and now this young lady about age 30 has a brain tumor. It looks like she's going to die. What kind of Bible study do you think I should go

through?" And I said, "I think you need to go through the gospel. Because there's no comfort outside the gospel. So, you need to give verses and say..." And I gave him several verses. I said, "Now, you need to say to him, 'Do you believe these things to be true?' If they believe these things to be true, then the comfort of God will come. But if they don't believe in the gospel, there is no comfort. I mean, you can go visit them every day, and there's not going to be any comfort outside of the gospel. That's why Corinthians says, "God of all comfort," Who comforts us. God's the One that comforts us. You think you're the source of comfort, then you're not going to be comforted. Because the day is going to come when you can't give them any hope. None. So, what's the source binding that evil? What's the source of freeing people? It's the gospel. We literally believe that's the power. We believe, according to John 3:19, that the gospel is literally able to detect if somebody is being truthful or not. "Oh, I want to get right with God. I want to get right." "Well, let's come to Jesus." "I don't want to come to Jesus." "Then you're lying." I can tell them right off the bat. I don't even have to be able to read their mind. Because Jesus Himself and

the gospel is that which is a litmus test for truth. If you come to the light, then it demonstrates that you're looking for truth. If you repel the light, then you love darkness rather than light because your deeds are evil. So, when you consider the power of the gospel, according to Ephesians 5:11, it has the power to expose sin. He says, "You want to expose unfruitful deeds? Put the gospel in there." When man begins to talk about the fact that, "Oh, I did this, I did this, I did this, I did this," I'm going, "I didn't hear Jesus in any of that." You know what we're exposing? Unfruitful deeds. There's nothing fruitful in any of those things.

We believe, according to Corinthians 2:12, that we literally have, through the gospel, the power to know what God wants. Can you think of anything else? Because Scripture tells us without the Spirit of God, which comes in at the moment that we receive Christ, there's no way we can know what God wants. We could read the Bible from now till kingdom come, which would leave us behind. But if we didn't receive the gospel, we would have no idea what God wants. And this is why Jesus says,

“Many are going to come on that day and they're going to say, ‘Well, we did all these works.’” He goes, “I didn't tell you to do that. You had no idea what I wanted you to do, did you?” And no, they didn't have any idea. Why? Because they didn't know Him. And that's the point. There's only one way you can know Him, and that's through the Spirit of God, and that's through the gospel. So, literally the gospel gives us the power to know what God wants. The gospel actually gives us the power to change others, according to 1 Peter 3, without a word. If you begin to live the gospel. That's pretty interesting, isn't it? The gospel is so powerful that if you just live it, God will bring about change. If you just live in such a way that you believe that God is the Savior. See, that's one of the reasons why a lot of times I just keep my big mouth shut. Because I believe in the gospel. I believe God saves. See, if you think you save... You'll wear people out. But if you believe Jesus saves, you go, “Well, I don't need to say that.” Only such a word that is good for the moment, good for the edification. You know, if I sanctify Him as Lord of my heart, He'll tell me what to say.

I think one of the greatest things or the greatest power of the gospel, according to Hebrews 4:12, is it has the power to convict. I mean, it's a great description, isn't it? That the word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. It's able to cut in. You know, people come to church, "I'm a pretty good guy." Yeah, gospel starts being preached, they go, "I'm a terrible person. I didn't even know it." So, what the Bible does is it begins to reveal things that you could never see. We believe in the power of God.

If you look in Revelation 1, it's the testimony of Christ that really is in the forefront, whether it's the Lamb of God that is being displayed or the altar that is being displayed in the book.

But if you look with me in Revelation 1:1, it starts off, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John,

(Revelation 1:2) who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw."

So that by the time you come to Revelation 19, of course, John stands before this great being, and he falls at his feet.

And in Revelation 19:10, it reads this way,

“Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.””

Okay, so what's prophecy about? The testimony of Jesus. What is that? The gospel. The power of God.

So that when we look in Revelation 11 and we see these two witnesses who are prophets, what do you think they're talking about? Okay, so why do you think they're hated? And how is it that in the most religious place in all of the earth, it's literally deemed as Sodom and Egypt?

Read with me, if you look with me, in Revelation 11, (Revelation 11:7) “When they (the prophets of God) have finished their testimony...”

We know what the testimony was, because the testimony is the testimony of Christ in their lives.

“When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them.

(Revelation 11:8) And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically...”

Or more specifically, which means that the Spirit of God is identifying its true identity. That's what it's saying. Okay, so you have this great city, which is mystically or spiritually called, the Spirit deems it, as Sodom and Egypt. What city is that? The same place where their Lord was crucified. We know where that was.

If you go all the way back to Isaiah 1, you can hear the voice of God in this really bringing accusation against His own people. If you look with me as, of course, we've been talking about the fact that their land's going to be desolate, of course, they're not listening to God, their whole head is sick. He says in verse 5, “Your heart is faint.” Who is He talking about?

(Isaiah 1:8) “The daughter of Zion...”

It's very clear within the passage.

He says in verse 9,

(Isaiah 1:9) “Unless the LORD of hosts

Had left us a few survivors,

We would be like Sodom,

We would be like Gomorrah.

(Isaiah 1:10) Hear the word of the LORD...”

How does He describe them?

“... You rulers of Sodom;

Give ear to the instruction of our God,

You people of Gomorrah.

(Isaiah 1:11) “What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?”

Says the LORD.

“I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams

And the fat of fed cattle...”

He's not talking about foreign nations. He's not talking about Sodom. He's talking about Israel.

“... And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats.

(Isaiah 1:12) When you come to appear before Me,

Who requires of you this trampling of My courts?

(Isaiah 1:13) Bring your worthless offerings no longer,
Incense is an abomination to Me.

New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies—
I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly.

(Isaiah 1:14) I hate your new moon festivals and your
appointed feasts,
They have become a burden to Me...”

“Stop praying.” Isn't that what He says basically in verse 15? “Stop praying. I'm not listening.” Why? Because it's religion that's praying.

So, if you look in Matthew 23, that's basically the same indictment that Christ has given to the religious leaders of that time. And as He is very clear within the passage, they do everything they do to be noticed by men, if you look in Matthew 23:5.

(Matthew 23:5) “But they do all their deeds to be noticed
by men...”

(Matthew 23:6) “They love the place of honor...”

(Matthew 23:7) “and respectful greetings...”

If you back up, what do they do towards the common man?

(Matthew 23:4) “They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger.”

So, what you have is an oppressive system of individuals that are trying to self-aggrandize. They're trying to lift themselves up. They're trying to look better than everybody else. So, you have these places of position and of oppression. It's one of the reasons why He says it's spiritually called Sodom for their immorality, and Egypt for their oppression. Egypt, once again, was a place of bondage for the children of Israel. And He says, “You're putting people in bondage.” That's the perfect description of religion. People go, “I just heard this happen. This pastor did this or this priest did this. I can't believe they did it.” And I go, “That's religion. It's immoral and it's oppressive.” All you have to do is follow the rote, and you can see everything they do. The arrogance of their heart is clearly shown in the fact that, well, it's not only repeated over and over again that they're hypocrites, but

that they don't seem to be concerned of bringing people into heaven but literally shutting them out of heaven.

If you look in verse 13,

(Matthew 23:13) “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

(Matthew 23:14) “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour...”

“You plunder; you're like a beast that just consumes the houses of widows. These poor women are listening to you. You're telling them that they need to give more money so that, what?” Of course, one of the things that Jesus accused the Pharisees of was being lovers of money.

But it goes on and says,

“... and for a pretense you make long prayers...”

One of the reasons why I don't like long prayers. Just talk to God. But get real with Him. Say what you're going to say and mean it. This means more to God than really long

sentences or paragraphs or books that you could pray to Him.

“... for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

(Matthew 23:15) Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.”

We're talking about religion.

So, if you drop on down to verse 33, much like John the Baptist calls them, He says,

(Matthew 23:33) “You serpents, you brood of vipers...”

Which, the reason He calls them “brood of vipers,” once again, is in that particular region, vipers, when the babies would start coming out, would almost immediately start eating their mother. And then if they had an opportunity, they would eat themselves, each other. So, it's a perfect picture of a kind of beast that just consumes, and there's no thought of kindness or anything.

But it says,

“You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?”

(Matthew 23:34) Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets...”

Now, I'm going to stop here. “Sending you prophets.”

Who's He talking to here? The Pharisees, the scribes, the Sadducees. Where do they live? Jerusalem.

“... behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city,

(Matthew 23:35) so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.”

Think about it. You murdered at the temple, the holy place. I mean, what a description of religion.

So, we come to Revelation 11, and what is clear within the passage is that these men are hated by the city in the

most self-righteous city of the world. So, in Revelation 11, you see that, and if you pick up with me, it talks about in verse 7,

(Revelation 11:7) “When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them.”

Now, it's very important at this juncture that you not only understand where we are, but you understand the whole concept of this beast coming out of the pit. Because what has been clear throughout, as you go back into Chapter 9 as well, you begin to see all sorts of horrific and terrible and hurtful things coming out of the pit. But the pit is not only what I believe to be a real place, but it is the culmination of man and his hatred towards men. So, that as Scripture will continue to reveal, we become like beasts as we go in our arrogance, and we begin to consume for ourselves. We literally become like animals.

Let me give you a couple of examples. One is found in Peter, so you can turn there with me in 2 Peter. And if you turn quickly, I'll give you more verses. But in 2 Peter 2, he

begins to talk about those that are false prophets, verse 1, false teachers with destructive heresies.

He goes on and says in verse 2,

(2 Peter 2:2) “Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;

(2 Peter 2:3) and in their greed they will exploit you...”

In other words, promise people something of this world and they'll oftentimes follow whatever you say.

But if you drop on down, it says this in verse 10,

(2 Peter 2:10) “And especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties.”

These are people that shake their fists at the devil and all kinds of things. They're indiscriminate in what they do, and they're detached and uncaring and unfaithful as well because of their infidelities.

(2 Peter 2:11) “Whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord.

(2 Peter 2:12) But these, like unreasoning animals...

It's literally conveying,

“... born as creatures of instinct...”

And the name “beast” is literally that which describes man without God. If in fact you understand, at the beginning of creation, God sent forth His Spirit and life was created and all kinds of fish and teeming and beasts were all throughout the earth. But He made a distinction with man. He breathed in man. And the intent for man was that he had the Spirit of God within him, which would make him distinct. That is to say, that he would not only have a sense of conscience, but that he would have the Spirit of God within him. This was the intent of God for man. So that, as Scripture says, in 1 Corinthians 15, he says, “At first, God created man, Adam, the first Adam, as a living soul.” He then goes on and says, “And then He brought forth the second man, Christ, as the living Spirit, which gives life.” That's a very distinct difference. And that is to say that the Spirit of Christ is caring for others and is always giving and bringing life to others, whereas the spirit of man or of beast is that which is surviving self-

preservation, doing things by instinct, so that there's a distinction that is made. And this is why Christ says you've got to be born again. You can't just be in the flesh, because left to yourself, you'll not be any different than the beast.

There's an interesting passage in Galatians which really warns the church not to act beast-like. And if you look with me in Galatians 5, he says, "Now, you've been given freedom in Christ, but don't go back to your beastly ways."

Galatians 5:13 reads this way,

"For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."

That's the Spirit of God.

(Galatians 5:14) "For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'"

(Galatians 5:15) But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another."

That sounds like a brood of vipers, doesn't it?

(Galatians 5:16) "But I say, walk by the Spirit..."

There's a change that takes place.

Psalms 49 will give you something similar to this. Once again, a passage that we've oftentimes quoted.

(Psalm 49:10) "For he sees that even wise men die;

The stupid and the senseless alike perish

And leave their wealth to others.

(Psalm 49:11) Their inner thought is that their houses are forever

And their dwelling places to all generations;

They have called their lands after their own names."

But verse 12 identifies what this is.

(Psalm 49:12) "But man in his pomp will not endure;

He is like the beasts that perish."

He goes on and talks about this as well.

And if you end in verse 16,

(Psalm 49:16) “Do not be afraid when a man becomes rich,

When the glory of his house is increased;

(Psalm 49:17) For when he dies he will carry nothing away;

His glory will not descend after him.

(Psalm 49:18) Though while he lives he congratulates himself—

And though men praise you when you do well for yourself—

(Psalm 49:19) He shall go to the generation of his fathers;
They will never see the light.

(Psalm 49:20) Man in his pomp, yet without understanding,

Is like the beasts that perish.”

When we come to Revelation and we begin to read about this beast coming out of the pit, it is that which literally describes the heart of man without God. What is the pit like? It's full of people without God, who have rejected the Spirit of God, the love of God, and, well, what do we

call ourselves in America, consumers? And the desire is just for consuming. There is no care for anybody else. As Jesus says, in the last days, the love of many will grow cold. And you begin to see that detachment coming in. Well, it's the picture of the beast.

If you look with me in Revelation 13, you see at the beginning of Chapter 13,

(Revelation 13:1) “And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns...”

Well, he's actually going to describe that beast. You know what the ten horns are? The ten horns are ten kings. What do you think the beast is? The nations. How do we know that? Well, all you have to do is read Daniel 7 and Daniel 8, as he begins to have these visions of nations coming out into power, whether it be Babylon or the Medes and the Persians or the Greeks. And all of them are given a beast to identify them, so that Babylon, when it attacks, attacks like this beast, like a lion with wings. Greece is like this leopard that runs faster, has four wings. But they're all beasts. They're all beasts that devour.

And if you back up even to Daniel 4, when Nebuchadnezzar in all of his pride and arrogance says, “This is my city, I built this,” God says, “You'll become like a beast in the field for a period of seven.” And his fingernails grow; his hair is like wings. It's a very interesting picture. So, what is God saying? At the moment that you became arrogant, and you said, “It was all about me,” you became a beast. God is separating. All the way through, He's been separating.

So, when you look at Chapter 13 of Revelation and you come to the end of it, it talks about the fact that the beast is going to declare that you can't buy or sell without the mark of the beast. Remember that?

Revelation 13:17) “And he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name.”

(Revelation 13:18) Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.”

In other words, man was created on the sixth day. And the fullness of testimony is three times. So, the fundamental point is that man, no matter how hard he tries, never gets beyond six. And let me just say this. Religion can never get beyond six. One of the things that's being revealed in this particular passage in Revelation, religion is the beast that is destroying the prophets. Because in their pomp and in their arrogance, it's what causes them to want to devour truth. Because what's the testimony of Christ? The testimony of Christ is you're level at the cross. The testimony of Christ is there's none righteous, no, not one. The testimony of Christ is, but if it weren't for the grace of God, we would have no hope; that if it weren't for the love of God, we wouldn't even know what it would mean to give or to help or to bless. There is no blessing aside from God. The whole message of the gospel is none of me, all of Him. This is why religion hates, hates the gospel. It hates the testimony. So, does it not make sense that the beast in man is going to overwhelm up and come out and slay these two?

So, the passage reads, if you go back to Revelation 11, it says,

(Revelation 11:7) “When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them.

(Revelation 11:8) And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord...”

It's interesting, “their Lord,” going back to the two prophets, which seems to convey that there's nobody else in the city that perceives Him as Lord.

“... where also their Lord was crucified.

(Revelation 11:9) Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations...”

Of course, Jerusalem has become such a place in which it really is quite a mixture of all kinds of people. Which, to me, I think one of the great points of this is that there's no discrimination here. All of men are wicked. Men like to segment. They like to say, “Well, this group is better than this group.” We're hearing the pendulum swing now,

again. But the fact of the matter is, you're not better. I'm not better. We're all one in Christ. But there's always been that sense. But what we have is, there's always been one place where the world has always agreed, and that is for their hatred for God. It doesn't matter what their tongue, what their language is, it doesn't matter what their background is, it doesn't matter what their lineage is. The Sadducees and the Pharisees are going to hold hands. The Herodians hate Pharisees, but they're going to work together to crucify Jesus.

And I think that's the picture of this in verse 9,

“Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit...”

It seems like there are going to be some people coming in trying to bury their bodies. They're not going to let them bury them. They're going to hold them back. Actually, the text reads that they're going to hold them back from burying the bodies. Now, that's hating, because when you go through Scripture, one of the ways that you show disdain for somebody is that you don't bury the body. The

act of burying is an act of honor. So, the fact that they're not allowing is them displaying great disdain and hatred for these two prophets.

And it says in the passage,

(Revelation 11:10) “And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice...”

And the connotation is they're jumping up and down. That's how happy they are.

“... over them and celebrate; and they will send gifts...”

“*Dōron*” is the Greek word that is used here. They're going to send their offerings to one another. The word “gifts” there is literally another word for offering. Once again, what man does is he doesn't give his offerings to God with religion; he gives his offerings to man. Because he congratulates man. You know, if there's a good enough performance, he gives them more money. But it's not giving to God. I mean, when the Spirit of God comes upon you, you have the Spirit of Christ that you love to give. You just are begging for opportunities to give. When it becomes mechanical and church-like, it's all about

performance and what somebody does. And it's sort of a trade-off. You pay for a service. And after they're done, you put in the money. Well, they're so happy with the way that people are keeping other people from burying these two guys, that they're congratulating them, “Good job. You didn't let them bury them. And let me buy you a present. Let me give you an offering.” And so, they're giving offerings to one another. It's kind of bizarre. Of course, it is a religious town, so obviously they're going to do that.

“... they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those...”

How did they harass them? With the truth. Not only with the truth verbally, but with the truth visually. Because remember, they could hold the skies back, and the rain, or they could do these wonders. They could breathe fire out of their mouth. I mean, they could see literally the veracity of what they were saying was true, and this really bothered them. I mean, it's bad enough that they're preaching, but that they're preaching, and it's true? Okay, that's really messing them up. So, what is it telling them?

Well, what does the gospel tell any of us? You have to change. There needs to be a change in your life. You come to Christ, you're no longer living for yourself, you're living for Him. Well, man really, really, really hates that. And this interesting picture is given to display that.

There's a passage in Luke, if you'll turn back there with me, in Luke 3. It's just a simple truth, but I just wanted to kind of conjoin it with what we've been talking about here. The simplicity of this particular gospel and demonstrating things and how wonderful it is, God could just say something, but it's better just for Him to show you. And if you think about it, that's what's happening in Revelation. He's not just telling you that religion hates truth. He's showing you how much they hate truth. And if you look in Luke 3, it starts off with giving a list of basically who's who of that time. And if we were to sit down and talk about the greats of our day, it would be a similar list, just mirroring many of the things.

If you look at the beginning, it says,

(Luke 3:1) “Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar...”

Pretty great guy in the sense of he's ruling the world. So, he's a pretty powerful person. It mentions the governor of the region, which was Pontius Pilate. It mentions Herod, who was a tetrarch in the region. It mentions Philip, and it mentions Lysanias. These are tetrarchs. These are rulers. These are the movers and the shakers. And in case you think we're just thinking politically, we're not just thinking politically. Let's talk about the really, really big guys in the spiritual world.

(Luke 3:2) “in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas...”

So, we basically covered, because they would kind of shift back and forth, and I think they were kind of related to each other. So, we want to establish that we know that these men exist. We know that their positions stand firm. We know that they're the great ones of society.

Now, if you look at the text, God just simply says,

“... the word of God came to John... in the wilderness.”

All along, God's been trying to tell us something, “You're looking for Me in the wrong places.” The simplicity of

Scripture just to say, “I don't want to talk through those guys. They don't listen to Me. I don't like them. Because their desire is for the things of the world. But John, he's one of My guys. These fishermen guys, these are some of My guys. These guys keeping watch over their flock by night, these are My guys. This young woman who has just kept herself pure, it's one of Mine.” And you begin to see the list, and none of it has anything to do with religion. It's why Christ was crucified by, and this is why Jesus cries out in Matthew 23, “O Jerusalem, you love to kill your prophets. You love to kill them.” Scripture is telling us something but not just telling us in Revelation. It's showing, and what a wonderful revealing it is. The purpose of it is to keep churches from letting that come through the door. Do you understand?

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your word that brings us back to that truth, simplicity of truth. As we see this hatred and hostility that not only the world has, but

religion has for You. You told Your disciples, “If they hated Me, they're going to hate you when you follow Me.” And so, Lord, help us as a people, as Your church, to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding for the work of the faith, that we might stand on the power of God and none other.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed. In a way, I'm asking you to just hang in there with me. And don't let yourself be dissuaded by that which has never been true.