

Against Seductions

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[0 : 0 0] Father, we confess before you that we have longings and yearnings and desires that we turn away from and that we have longings and yearnings and desires that are not truly of you.

We ask, Father, that you would put to death in us desires that are not of you and that you would fan into flame within us longings and yearnings that do truly come from you.

And, Father, we acknowledge before you that not only do we need your Holy Spirit to do this, but we cannot do it at all by our own effort and apart from thinking about your Son.

So we ask, Father, that as we reflect upon your word and as we are open to your Holy Spirit, that you would make us disciples gripped by the gospel, living for your glory.

And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. I have to confess that every time I read a text like the gospel text, which I just read a few moments ago, I smile.

[1 : 1 4] I don't know how many of you noticed me smile at a certain part. And that's because quite a few years ago, I led a young man to faith that he did a lot of drugs, mainly just soft drugs, marijuana, but exclusively just soft drugs.

And he had a hard time after he became a Christian, believing that he wasn't supposed to keep smoking up. And back in those days, they call marijuana grass. And I still remember the day he came to me all excited, saying the grass is in the Bible, so it must be all right, because God made the grass of the fields for human beings.

And so every time I see the word grass in a text, I think of this young man and how he would get all excited, thinking that it was showing that the Bible was giving him permission to smoke marijuana. It's actually a good introduction to the talk today.

That was quite a reading by Helen. Helen. I was joking with Jeremiah the other day, and again, just before the service. I said, I'm really curious to see what music you've picked to go with a scripture text on the great prostitute and the beast.

And because that's what we're going to talk about today. And I have to confess, this has been one of the hardest chapters in the book of Revelation for me to come to terms with. I don't know what you were thinking when you were hearing the text, but it was a hard text for me to get my mind around.

[2 : 4 1] Part of it is that there's certain parts of the part of the way it's written makes my eyes glaze over. When I hear there were five, and then there's one, and then there'll be another one, and then there's an eighth like it.

When I hear that it was and was not and is and my eyes, it just makes my eyes glaze over. That's part of it. And part of it is it's just, it's a really, really difficult text.

So what we're going to do today is if you get your Bibles, we're going to just, I'm going to try to help you slowly read through the text. You see, the problem I have with the text is I could give you a two-hour lecture on the text.

But what does that do? I mean, the big question is, so what? You know? Now what? I could give you a long lecture, but what we're going to do is we're going to look at the text. And I actually think that there's some very powerful lessons for us to learn that can affect how we live our day-to-day lives from the text.

So it's Revelation chapter 17, and I invite you to turn to it. And it's the text about the great prostitute and the beast.

[3 : 47] You know, if we had a church sign, we could put that. Our sermon this Sunday is on the great prostitute and the beast. I'm sure it would just draw in the crowds, even in a snowstorm. Just a burning question that most people ask.

I mean, this is apart from the fact that it's unbelievably politically incorrect to use the word prostitute. But that's what the word that the Bible uses. So here's how it goes.

Then one of the seven angels, Revelation 17.1, one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on the earth have become drunk.

Now just sort of pause. One of the things about difficult texts is that we have to often slow down and notice the flow, the pauses in the text.

And here we see that the angel is telling John what he's going to do. He's going to give John a vision or a showing so John can see something.

[5 : 00] And he tells John what he's going to see in sort of a very, very brief description. And we can see here that he said you're going to see a beast sitting on many waters.

And at the very, very end, maybe if you were listening carefully when Helen was reading or if you were following along and you noticed it because you're a very attentive reader, you're going to see that the many waters, that the text itself tells you that it represents peoples, people groups and languages and nations.

And it shows the beast in a sense over, sitting them is, over them is an image of possession, of control. And he said you're going to see this woman and she's the great prostitute and you're going to see people drunk with what it is that makes her who she is.

They get so excited over this. It's like a type of drunkenness. They drink more and more of this and it overwhelms them.

And that's what you're going to see. And as well as that, as we're going to see at the end, the prostitute is the great city.

[6 : 12] The great city. Just the other day, I was reading the Saturday papers and I was reading a columnist and one of the op-ed writers in the paper and they just made a casual reference about New York and central Ohio.

And the way she wrote about it, it was just very obvious that we would understand that New York City is an important place. It's a cultured place and that a place like Dayton, Ohio or central Ohio isn't very important.

It's not sophisticated. It's not like a leading city. It's a place where people who don't matter as much live. And the way she wrote, she didn't say it in those words.

She just made a comment about Manhattan and New York and she made a comment about central Ohio. And she wrote it in such a way that every one of the readers she assumed would automatically get it.

And we do get it. We do understand on one level that there's a type of superiority to certain cities. That if we were to announce that there was a political symposium, if there was a fashion symposium of the latest designs from Dayton or Billings, Montana, it would not have quite the same as if it's from New York and London and Paris.

[7 : 39] That if we were to get the leading political thinkers from Billings, Montana or Dayton, Ohio, it would not have the same type of impact as people from New York and Washington, London and Paris.

So we understand on one level something about why it is that a city is going to be used to be a bit of an image for a certain way that we understand the world naturally.

It might look odd at first, but if we think about it, we already think in those terms that there are cities which are somehow important and significant and others that don't.

In Canada, Toronto wishes it was a combination of New York City and Los Angeles. And it laments that it laments that it's not Washington, that politics is in Ottawa.

And maybe politicians in Ottawa lament that they are an unimportant, relatively unimportant country and city compared to Washington and Moscow and London and Paris.

[8 : 48] So the angel tells John, I'm going to show you a vision. And this is what you're going to see. And he's going to have the vision. And then the rest of the chapter is going to be different comments on aspects of the vision to explain it and make it clear.

So it is the vision that he actually has. The vision begins in verse 3. And it goes like this. And the angel carried me away in the Holy Spirit into a wilderness.

And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names. And it had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet and adorned with gold.

Actually, in the original language, it says golded with gold. It was golded with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality.

And on her forehead was written the name of the mystery, Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations.

[10 : 00] And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. Just sort of pause there. That's the vision. But before we talk about the vision, I just want to draw a little bit of an aside.

Maybe for you, this will be the important point of the day. And you'll say, okay, God, I got what I need to get out of this sermon. Now my eyes can glaze over and I'll fall asleep for the rest of it.

Hopefully you won't say that, but maybe for some of you, you will. This is the last time in the book of Revelation that the wilderness is mentioned, I believe. Maybe I'm wrong about it, but I believe it's the last time. So I just wanted to draw you out a thing.

For Christians, in the book of Revelation, the wilderness is a place of protection where you can see and learn things that you can't see and learn other places.

And this is actually a really important thing for us. Because every Christian has times when they're in the wilderness. And we hate being in the wilderness.

[11 : 02] We find it depressing. And we often find it full of despair. But in the book of Revelation, the wilderness is a place where we experience God's provision.

Obviously, the wilderness is the wilderness. It means that there's a whole pile of things that we usually would like to have that we don't have. And it means that there's power that we would like to have that we don't have.

And that there's delights and pleasures that we would like to have and we don't have. It's the wilderness. There's a whole pile of things that we don't have. But in the book of Revelation, wilderness is the place of God's provision.

And the question in the book of Revelation is always, while you're in the wilderness, what can you now see and hear from God that you could not see and hear anywhere else? And for an aside, for some of us, if you're at all like me, when you're in the wilderness, you hate being in the wilderness.

And often when I'm in the wilderness, all I think of is my lacking, all the things I'm lacking. But the text is inviting me to understand that sometimes when I'm in the wilderness, what I should first of all be doing is looking and seeing how is it that God is providing for me even while I'm in the wilderness.

[12 : 15] And then to say to him and ask to him in prayer, what is it you would like me to see and hear while I am in the wilderness? Just a bit of an aside.

But it's maybe an important one for some of you. Maybe you've come here today and you're in the wilderness. You feel like you're in the wilderness. And all you're feeling is despair and anxiety.

And the book of Revelation has a very, very, it's a consistent lesson every time the wilderness comes up. I don't know if I've mentioned it very much before. I wanted to mention it before we moved away and the wilderness would not turn.

But what about the beast? So that John is taken by the angel into the wilderness. And in the wilderness, he's able to see and hear. Here's the angel and he sees the beast and the great prostitute.

And it's a very, very odd vision. And at first, it doesn't seem like it's a very helpful vision. Because how on earth will we ever see something like the great prostitute?

[13 : 19] How can that actually be something which is helpful for us? Well, what we see in the vision is this. The first thing is we see a great mistake.

Remember I said that John is told by the angel that he's going to see a great prostitute sitting on many waters.

And the image usually of sitting on something is an image of control, of dominance. And so what we see is we see the woman sitting on the beast.

And the beast is described as having seven heads and ten horns so that the person who's been reading all the way through the book of Revelation will understand that even though it now is a little bit different because it's a different color, it's the same beast that the dragon, which is an image of the devil, has called out of the abyss to do the dragon's bidding upon earth.

And the beast is a person, an empire. He's evil, completely and utterly under the domination of the dragon.

[14 : 33] And so he's a different color. He's scarlet. In the ancient world, scarlet is the color of wealth. And all that wealth can buy. All of the luxury that he can buy.

And there's a great mistake here. And John's going to be caught up in it. We're going to talk about that in a moment. But by the end of the image, you'll understand the great mistake. There's an old blues song that has a line.

Don't give the devil a ride. He only wants to drive. It's an old blues song. Don't give the devil... I try to sing it. Actually, my voice sounding the way it is, it maybe sounds like I've been drinking cheap whiskey and smoking unfiltered cheap cigarettes.

And maybe I could, with Jeremiah up here, maybe I could imitate a blues singer singing this particular line. But I'll spare you it. Don't give the devil a ride. He only wants to drive.

And so the great prostitute, which is the great city. The great city organized in rebellion and contempt of God. That's what the image of the great prostitute is.

[15 : 38] It's an image of the great city. The great city. The New York. The Los Angeles. The Paris. The London. The Washington. The Milan. The Moscow.

The Beijing. The great city organized in contempt against the living God. organized to do whatever it wants. Organized around political power and wealth.

To be its own boss. And it rides upon and sits upon the beast. And the great city thinks that it sits upon the beast. That creation of the dragon.

And therefore it controls it. But the great city does not understand that you do not give the devil a ride. Because it only wants to drive. And by the end of the story.

You will see that the great prostitute thinks it controls the beast. But the beast controls the great city. And the beast will see the great city by the end of the chapter.

[16 : 41] Devoured. Destroyed. Completely and utterly. Because that is the nature of the beast. And the woman herself.

She is portrayed as wearing clothing of purple and scarlet. And in the ancient world as I already mentioned. Scarlet is the color that indicates great wealth.

And purple is the color that indicates great political power and prestige and authority. And so this woman is representing the great city.

Where political power. And with it all of the. And great wealth. And all of the persuasive and cultural power that flows.

All of it in a sense the social mysticism. And spirituality. Which is so deeply and utterly connected to political power. And wealth.

[17 : 39] And the adoration that goes along with people who adore such great political power and great wealth. And it's united in her. And she's golded with gold.

And she's covered with jewels. And she sits drunk. And what is she drunk with? She's drunk on the fact that so many kings and peoples come to do her bidding.

To come to have a dalliance with her. And she casually. And she's not only does she casually be completely and utterly contemptuous of the living God in his ways. But with impunity.

She will kill those who bear witness to Jesus. And delight in the fact that their blood is shed. Now before I go any further.

You see this is where the book of Revelation can sometimes be very very difficult for us. In the 70s. I know a lot of you weren't born in the 70s. And just so you're clear.

[18 : 36] I'm talking about the 1970s. Not the 1870s or 1770s. But in the 1970s there was a very very powerful book called The Late Great Planet Earth. It sold more books in the 70s than any other book in North America.

It was almost completely and utterly wrong about everything it said. And at the time there were 10 countries in Europe that made up the European Union. And so they imagined that somehow or another Rome or whatever it was.

Was the seat of the Antichrist and the beast. And this new thing would all happen. All just talking about the future. Just all talking about the future. But the book of Revelation is fundamentally a book about Jesus.

It's a book about Jesus. What he's done. What he's doing. And what he will do. The book of Revelation is a book about Jesus. What he's done. What he's doing. And what he will do. And that means that whenever we read the Bible.

Whenever we read Revelation 17. There's two types of things that are going on. On one hand it's talking about something which exists in the future for us. Unless we are just days away from the end of time.

[19 : 42] I don't know if we are. I don't believe we are. But we might very well be. We might very well be. And so part of what's being described is something which is describing the very, very end of the end.

And part of it's describing what we live right now. And it's not just that the Bible is sort of a series of symbols for us to help to understand what we're living right now.

Because everything in the book of Revelation will somehow or another at some point in time be completely and utterly fulfilled. Jesus will come back. Things will come to an end. But when we read parts like this we don't know.

I mean obviously we're not going to see a woman see a beast. But maybe we will. I don't know. I don't know. Because in advance we won't know what parts are symbolic and we don't know what parts are literal in advance.

But the most important thing is for us to have the words of scripture firmly in our minds and in our hearts. So that if we are alive when that time comes we'll recognize the signs.

[20 : 46] See my problem I have with most radio preachers who talk about the book of Revelation and most popular authors. is they purport to understand what's symbolic and what's literal.

And be able to tell you precisely what every one of the details means. And I have to confess before you that when I listen to them I think to myself only God can know that.

And you might be a very good man and you might be a very wise man but you're not God. So you can't be so definite about these things. But what matters is that we remember the words.

As I mentioned a couple of weeks ago there's a whole genre of fantasy novels and fairy tale type stories. And often in this whole genre there's some type of a quest.

And on the quest usually there's something maybe it's a written document. Maybe it's some words of a seer. And there's certain types of signs that they have to recognize to fulfill the quest.

[21 : 49] And a great challenge within the course of the story is to actually remember the wording, the precise wording of the signs. And if you know the story you'll know that people forget them.

They get caught up. They get confused. They don't recognize them. Maybe the reader doesn't even recognize it at first. But often the reader does because the narrator will help us to know. And in a sense what the book of Revelation is doing is inviting us on one hand to understand that some of this which is future.

The main thing for us to do is to remember the words. And if we remember the words we remember the signs. Then when the time actually comes. When the time actually comes.

And we'll maybe be able to recognize what was symbolic and what was literal. And how the different signs all coalesce around a particular event. But to try to figure that all out in the future in advance.

I just think that's just not very helpful. But at the same time everything in the word refers to things that we can be experiencing right now. And the very, very first thing that the text is going to do.

[22 : 57] We now have the vision. So John in verses 1 and 2 he's told by the angel that we're going to have this vision. In verses he goes to the wilderness. In verses 3 to 6a he has the vision. But then look at the very, very puzzling thing that happens to John in response to the vision.

And it's at the very last part of verse 6. And most of your Bibles, you know, verse 6 is broken up and a new paragraph begins. At the very end of verse 6 it says this.

When I saw her, I marveled greatly. Now this should give us all pause. He liked her. He was attracted to the great prostitute.

He was blown away by the great prostitute. The great prostitute spoke to something inside of him. And this is a profound warning for every one of us.

That there is in fact something attractive about evil. Even this city, this preeminent city that's organized in complete and utter contempt of God.

[24 : 09] And that will casually, willfully, whenever it pleases, put to death those who speak of the living God. And speak of Jesus. And John, an apostle in the presence of an angel.

Find something marvelous and attractive about it. And if that can happen to John, it will happen to you and me. It's one of the reasons we need to read the Bible and guard our hearts.

And ask that God will be kind to us. That God will purge from us and put to death within us any desire that we might have for such great evil.

That he would put to death within us anything within us that would have such a longing and yearning to see such a great city exist.

And he knows the Bible. God knows our hearts. And so there's this warning to us in it. John has the angel snap him out of it.

[25 : 16] It's in verse 7. But the angel said to me, Why do you marvel? It's almost like a slap on the side of the face. John, what are you doing?

That's the great prostitute. That's the city organized in contempt against God. And in rebellion against God. Seen itself as in complete and utter control.

Why are you marveling? I will tell you the mystery of the woman. And of the beast with the seven heads and ten horns. It carries her. And now he'll start to take the image and explain the different parts of it.

First, the beast. Verse 8. The beast that you saw was and is not and is about to rise from the bottomless pit, the abyss, and go to destruction.

The dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast. Because it was and is not and is to come. Right?

[26 : 19] He's saying here that those who are not followers of Jesus will marvel to see the beast. But just a few words earlier, John marveled. There's something within us that finds humanity organized in rebellion against God and contemptuous against the living God, attractive.

And I'm going to talk more about the beast in a moment. But John is just reminding him that this is the same beast that you just saw earlier in Revelation 13.

This is the same beast that the dragon called out of the abyss to be the one that would bring all earth under its sway. This is the same beast that would have an apparent resurrection that would cause all of the world to find it marvelous.

It's powerful. But as we'll see in a moment, it's not a true resurrection. It's a deadly, deathly resurrection that only leads into bondage away from freedom.

Verse 9. This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated. They are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen. One is, the other has not yet come.

[27 : 37] And when he does come, he must remain only a little while. Well, as for the beast that was and is not, it is an eight, but it belongs to the seven. And it goes to destruction. Doesn't that sound like a lot of fantasy novels?

Doesn't it? And fairy tales with that language. I have to confess my mind glazes over. And what it's going to mean in the future, I don't know because I'm not God. I'm not God.

I don't know what it will mean in the future. I don't know what it will mean when the end finally comes. I don't know what it means. I don't know which parts will be symbolic and which parts will be literal. But I hope that if I am here in the days just before the day that Jesus arrives, just before the world's last night, I hope I will remember this text and understand what I'm seeing.

But one of the things that we can understand is that the text is saying that God is in control and that there's a process of kings. And that there's going to eventually be like a king and then a king and then it's over.

And that throughout all of that, whatever it is that's happening, that God is the one who's completely and utterly in control. And that's what's going on. And that the beast, in a sense, isn't just coming out of nowhere.

[28 : 46] In a sense, today, right now, the parts of Washington and Moscow and Ottawa and London and Paris and Rome, parts of all of these great cities that are already organized in rebellion and contempt of the living God, that when that final great city comes, it will be understood that it did not come out of nowhere, that it emerged out of something that had already been going on for a long time on the earth and that you and I already have to deal with on some level, not to the same level and degree that those who are here for the world's last night will have to deal with it, but that there is already something in the great cities of the world and our desire for the great cities of the world.

That's already part of a process that will one day culminate in the great city made in contempt of the living God. Verse 12, And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour together with the beast.

These are of one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the beast, and they will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, free as Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called.

Actually, in the original language, there's the definite article before each of the three last words. It should actually say literally, And those with him are the called and the chosen and the faithful.

Makes sort of awkward English, but that's what the original language is. They will make war on the Lamb, verse 14, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are the called and the chosen and the faithful.

[30 : 46] They're going to make war on the Lamb, and they're going to lose. I don't know what the ten kings means. I don't know what it means. But, you know, we see something about it, and we're going to see it because it's all coming to a close.

We can see something about it right now. You know, as I was reading this, I was thinking a lot about what happened to Alison Redford, the former premier of Alberta. I'm not trying to make any political points.

I'm not trying to say that she's the beast or anything like that. I'm really not, okay? But everybody in her party and her cabinet loved her when she beat the Wild Rose Alliance, didn't they? But they're also very quick to throw under a bus, aren't they?

Like, isn't that how politics works? And, you know, you see with the insight, and the politicians involved with the insight, am I saying the right word, the thing in the east side of Vancouver, and living lavish lives.

And we see with Alison Redford, and we see with other politicians that they have a desire to live lives of luxury. And to be heavy-handed in politics. And they think they have their cabinet and their party with them with one mind.

[31 : 55] And the party and the cabinet will throw you under the bus as quick as the blink of an eye. On one hand, what you see here with the Ten Kings, we see in the papers all the time, all the time, all the time.

It's saying something which is true about those who worship power for power and wealth for wealth. Well, it's saying something true. In fact, as we'll see in a moment, it's saying something also very, very true, that on one hand, the way that the lamb will beat the great prostitute is by doing nothing.

Because the very, very kings that are also alive with the beast will turn on the great prostitute and completely and utterly destroy her. That all evil has within itself something which is self-destructive.

That all evil has something which is its own punishment. I had friends when I was in high school and in university who got involved in drugs, hard drugs.

And several of them, their lives were completely and utterly and irreparably ruined. It ruined their minds. It ruined their IQs. It ruined their relationships with their family.

[33 : 08] And no prison and no jail sentence could punish them more than drugs punished them. Being completely and utterly under the grip of pornography is its own punishment.

It ruins relationships with real women. It ruins your time. In a sense, it is its own punishment. Worshiping power for the sake of power, it seems like it's something that is good for you and it helps you, but it ultimately becomes its own punishment.

That there's something about evil which destroys us. And that's what this text is trying to make clear to us. That we might repent. Look how it finishes.

Verse 15. And the angel said to me, The waters that you saw where the prostitute is seated are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages. And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute.

They will hate the great city. They will make her desolate and naked and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire. For God has put into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast who will destroy them until the words of God are fulfilled.

[34 : 29] The woman that you saw is the great city that is dominion over the kings of the earth. Now, just to wrap it up, how does this affect us?

Maybe already the text has spoken to your lives in different ways, but the text talks about yearning and desire. And to understand it, we need to look at another text. And that is that the great prostitute is, the great city is ultimately in contrast with another city.

And to see it, you have to turn with me to Revelation chapter 21. And if you turn to Revelation 21, you'll see another woman and you'll see another city in a very, very different context.

You see, as we read the story of Revelation 17, we have to understand that all evil is a bending or a twisting of something which is good.

That evil is a bending or a twisting of something that's good. The devil can actually not create anything. Evil doesn't create anything.

[35 : 42] Evil bends and twists the good. So what is the bending or the twisting of the great prostitute, the great city and rebellion against God? It is a bending and twisting of a city that we were made to long for.

Verse 1 of chapter 21, Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.

prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man and woman.

He will dwell with them, and they will be his people. And God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more.

Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. See, Revelation 17 poses to us, to you and me, this question.

[37 : 00] Do I long to rule in hell or serve in heaven? Do I long to rule in hell or serve in heaven?

Do I long for that city which is humanity organized under the redemptive care of God, where God is present, and I behold him face to face without shame, and I delight in his presence, I delight in his face, I delight that he sees me, I delight that I stand always naked before him, and that that is a great joy.

Is that the cry and the longing of my heart? Or is the cry and the longing of my heart for that city where God is not welcome unless I bid him? Which is the longing and the yearning of my heart?

Which is the longing and the yearning of your heart? And if I long and yearn for that city, that time, that place where God is distant, where he only comes at my bidding, he only sees what I want him to see, he only does what I want him to do, he only knows what I want him to know, he only shows up if I feel like spending some time with him, do I in fact have within myself the desire that even though I might not be able to rule all of hell, I just desire and long to be able to rule some tiny part of hell.

And it's connected to another fundamental longing and yearning. You see, do I long and yearn to tower over situations? Do I long and yearn to tower over situations spiritually or with my mind or with my looks or with my position or my influence or my affluence?

[39 : 06] Do I long to tower over situations? And if I live in a world where I always long to tower over situations, there's this ever deepening desire to tower more and more and more and more because the only option is if I am not towering, then somebody else is towering and if somebody else is towering, then I am cowering before them.

And so, is the desire of my heart, is the dreams that come in my heart, as I think about situations with my boss or in my workplace or with my neighbors or with my kids or with my wife or with my friends, am I thinking about how they said this to me and how they got their way over me and how I wish that I had been able to say this or do this or have accomplished this or possess this or owned this so that I could tower over them all for their good.

But is the desire and the dream of my heart to tower? Is it even impossible for me to imagine any alternative to towering or cowering? And the Bible paints the picture that once we're redeemed by Jesus that the dream and the longing of our heart should be the doulos of Jesus, the servant of Jesus, that there's an option in redemption that's separate from towering or cowering and it's serving Jesus in that situation.

Is that the dream and the yearning of my heart? Is that how I bring the different memories and desires and imaginations of my heart to God?

Do I bring them to him in terms of how I can tower and my fear that if he doesn't show up and put those other people to defeat, I will tower? Or am I asking him to show me how I might be his doulos where I am?

[40 : 56] Do I secretly long to rule in hell rather than serve in heaven? And therefore do I long for that city where God is in subjection, is treated with contempt?

Very, very briefly in closing, you know, if you look all the way through the book of Revelation, the beast that appeared to have died but is risen to the dead, what does he do?

He destroys people. What does Jesus do? He saves people. He frees people. He makes people whole.

He makes people themselves. He brings freedom and peace, peace within and peace with God. You see, the beast's apparent death and resurrection was just a coming to life to be more completely and utterly in rebellion against God and to be more completely and utterly embroiled in a contempt against God.

But the Bible portrays that when Jesus dies, he conquers death by conquering that which causes death, which is our rebellion against God. So that's why on the cross, when he dies upon the cross and he says, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[42 : 16] He's taking upon himself our rejection of God. He's taking upon himself all that keeps us completely and utterly separate from God. And in his death and tasting all there is to death and in his resurrection, what we see in his death and in his resurrection is we see first and foremost a defeat of our evil and our rebellion against God.

And because he defeats this, he is able to defeat death. And so he stands on the far side of death, offering to us life and freedom and wholeness, and a way of being so gripped by the gospel that it's not just a matter that I, by my willpower, try to imagine now that I will change my longings and yearnings.

But that as we understand how Jesus tasted all there is to taste of death and tasted all there is to taste of that which causes death, and he took it all upon himself for us and emerged on the far side of that which causes death, which is human evil and our evil, and death itself.

And he emerges on the far side of that, willing to share his life and his triumph and his status as God's son forever, and we become his son or daughter forever, and he shares that with us, and as that grips us, it pushes us and prods us into new desires and to recognize that our desire to rule in hell is a fell desire that will only unmake us, and that the true desire that we should have is to be the doulos of the one who died to redeem us.

The beast emerges from death into deeper death and emerges from death into deeper evil, and those who marvel are led into deeper death and deeper evil.

[44 : 05] The lamb emerges triumphant over that which is evil and causes death and death itself. And when we put our hand out to him and his hand takes ours, it is life, it is reconciliation with God, it is wholeness, it is restoration to our humanity.

That is what we receive from his hand and to which we are to bear witness. Please stand. Bow your heads in prayer.

Father, first of all, we ask that you grant within us a mind of wisdom so that we might understand and see within us what our true desires are.

Help us to recognize, Father, how often we desire to rule in hell rather than to serve in heaven. And how often, Father, we desire and yearn to keep you far away.

And how often we desire, Father, to treat you with contempt. And we ask as well, Father, that you fend flame within us those longings and yearnings to serve in heaven, to be with you and to see you face to face and to have you see us face to face.

[45 : 32] But, Father, we confess that it's not just a matter of us changing our yearnings. we ask, Father, that you would make us followers of Jesus gripped by the gospel, gripped by what Jesus has done for us on the cross.

And, Father, we ask that what he has done for us on the cross, that that will so grip us that it will push us slowly, maybe quickly, but push us into new yearnings, true yearnings, original yearnings, the yearnings that you created within us to see you face to face.

And to joyfully serve you in heaven. And to be the doulos, the servant of your son Jesus, on this side of the grave, until we see him face to face.

Father, come, Lord Jesus, send him soon. And help us to be gripped by the gospel, living for your glory. And all this we ask in the name of Jesus, your son, and our savior.

Amen.