

Session 5: Restraining the Spirit of Antichrist

I. The Need to Restrain

1. The scriptures call the church to restrain the spirit of antichrist.

- a. The apostle Paul wrote these words to the church at Thessalonica,

Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And you know what restrains him [the antichrist] now, so that in his time he will be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only *he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way*. Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming (2 Thess. 2:5-8).

- b. This passage which calls for a restrainer to restrain the person of the antichrist until the correct time is the basis for this session. Toward the end of the session, we will dig into it in depth. For now, know that God is calling His church through an eternal purpose house of prayer to restrain the spirit of antichrist until God's eternal purpose for the church age has been fulfilled. With that as our objective, let's look first at the need to restrain.

2. We live in a day in which there is an urgency to make the bride ready.

- a. In our Lifeschool and Forerunner School classes, we have repeatedly made the point that the Lord will not return until the bride has made herself ready. Noting Revelation 19:7, we observe that when the bride has made herself ready, the Lord will return and not before. Along with His army, Christ will return to wage war with those who have opposed Him and to judge His enemies. He will slay the antichrist, the false prophet, and his evil army (Rev. 19:11-21). But, no matter how dark things get in the earth, Christ's second coming will not take place until Christ's bride has made herself ready.
- b. There are actually two key works of preparation in the church which must precede the second coming of Christ: 1) the bride must be fully made ready which will occur at the end of the age, and 2) the coming forth of the mature corporate man (the manchild of Revelation 12) which will take place at the midpoint of the tribulation period. The emergence of the manchild will trigger a first fruits harvest of souls and will initiate the last 3 and ½ years of the church age. Three and one-half years later the bride will have been fully made ready and Christ will return.
- c. The dates of these two strategic events have not been fixed in heaven; rather, they are dependent upon the church's response to God's invitation to make ready a people for the Lord. The church can hasten the Lord's coming by fervently pursuing the making ready of God's people. As 2 Peter 3:12 tells us, "What sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for *and hastening* the coming of the day of God." As the church alertly focuses on and prepares for the Bridegroom's return, Christ's second coming will be accelerated. Alternatively, if the church does not hunger and thirst for Jesus to come back, remains lukewarm, distracted, and asleep, His return will be delayed. The wedding is ready but the bride is not. Therefore, the Lord is now initiating a movement with a great sense of urgency to make the bride ready, and forerunners are instrumental in this effort.

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3. Knowing the consequences of the bride making herself ready, Satan is resisting the movement to make the bride ready.

- a. Aware that Christ's second coming is not a fixed date, Satan has devised a strategy to delay Christ's return. Satan knows his fate when the bride is made ready and Christ returns, and he is doing everything he can to delay the preparation of the bride. There seems to be two major fronts toward which Satan is directing his opposition. First, he is working on an individual and church level to keep both believers and unbelievers entangled in the secular, even demonic culture, and to keep them distracted, in compromise, and lawless. Furthermore, he is even seducing believers to fall away from the faith completely. In other words, he is attempting to keep God's people lukewarm rather than passionate in their preparation for the Bridegroom to come.
- b. Second, he is actively at work on a global level to build kingdoms which will be antichrist in nature so as to make it extremely hard to be a fervent Christian. Note these scriptures which address eight antichrist kingdoms, six of which have come forth historically and two of which will arise at some future date.

And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet *beast*, full of blasphemous names, having *seven heads* and ten horns (Rev. 17:3)... Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, and *they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come*; and when he comes, he must remain a little while. The *beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven*, and he goes to destruction. The *ten horns which you saw are ten kings* who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. *These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast"* (Rev. 17:9-13).

- c. Each of the seven heads of the beast represents a kingdom that has existed at some point in history or will emerge in the future. Remember that by the time the Book of Revelation was written, five of these kingdoms had already fallen, one was in existence, and two were to come in the future. The eighth, the kingdom of the antichrist, is to emerge from the seventh.
- d. Of importance to us, our view is that in our day both the seventh and eighth kingdoms are still in the future. Also of note, the first six kingdoms all opposed Israel, the Jews, and in the case of the sixth, Christians too. Likewise, the seventh kingdom will be an empire which will oppose Israel, the Jews, and Christians, and will take on many of the same characteristics as the six previous kingdoms. It is out of the seventh kingdom that the antichrist kingdom will arise also opposing Israel, the Jews, and Christians.

4. Our belief is that the seventh kingdom is the harlot Babylon and the eighth is radical Islam.

- a. It is difficult to know for certain what the seventh kingdom might be. However, based on our study of Revelation 17-18 and the current move toward a one world government or at least an alliance of nations, we believe that the seventh kingdom is the harlot Babylon which is seeking to unite the nations through a global government, a unified religion, and a global economic system. You can get many more details on our perspective from our Forerunner School class, *Understanding the End Times* at the following link <https://radicalpursuit.net/sessions/9-the-seventh-kingdom/>

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- b. From our study of end time scripture, we believe the eighth kingdom—the antichrist kingdom—will be an Islamic Caliphate, uniting and dominating the Middle East much like the Ottoman Empire did in the past. If you are unfamiliar with the term Islamic Caliphate, it is an Islamic state under the leadership of a caliph—the highest position in Islam. As a religious and political leader, a caliph reigns over the lands and peoples under his dominion. We believe the person of the antichrist will arise as such a caliph. You can find much more information on our view of the eighth kingdom at the following link to our *Understanding the End Times* class, <https://radicalpursuit.net/sessions/14-the-eighth-kingdom/>.

5. Even though the seventh kingdom has not been fully established, it is currently being formed.

- a. The seventh kingdom will emerge as a uniting of nations through a connected economy, a tolerant religious system, and common legislation. Religion is a key component in this future coalition of nations because many of the barriers to world peace are barriers of religion. Even now we see how world powers are coming together against many biblical truths. Conservative Christians and Jews stand out from the rest of the world in their beliefs and are being pressured to conform to a culturally acceptable form of religion. As part of this movement, there is also an attempt to promote the idea that there are many ways to God, with the objective being a state-run religion which combines Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.
- b. Economic forces also play a major role in setting up the world for the antichrist. The book of Revelation tells us that a global economy is a major part of the rise of the harlot. The world's economy is becoming more and more connected globally and the spirit of antichrist is and will use it to control the lives of the people of the world. In the days ahead, money will be a major tool of this evil movement to take absolute control over people's lives.
- c. The one-world system of government will be another feature of the seventh kingdom. Combining the principles of socialism, corporatism, and technology run by a group of wealthy elites and technocrats, the one world government will dictate public policy and legislation.
- d. This spirit is also using the various forms of media, the press, and the entertainment industry to foster the rise of an antichrist belief system. The world's education systems are also producing graduates who have been indoctrinated into secular humanism, socialism, and communism—making them ideal one-world citizens. Furthermore, schools have ruled God out of every aspect of people's lives in the teaching of history and science. Public schools now teach from a totally secular humanistic viewpoint so that many young people readily accept the propaganda of the antichrist system.
- e. In short, the seventh kingdom will combine a one-world government led by a small group of elites who will make policies and laws which facilitate their evil agenda; a controlled economy which will include restrictive policies that mandate certain actions in order to obtain employment, access entertainment, and even purchase food and other necessities; and a one-world religion which will combine the three religions of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

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- f. Even though the seventh kingdom has not yet come to full power, the mechanisms are in place for its formation. With all of the initiatives being taken by the world's elites and organizations like the United Nations, the seventh kingdom is well on its way to being formed.
6. Much like the seventh kingdom, the antichrist kingdom of radical Islam is also currently being formed.
 - a. Whereas the seventh kingdom is being promoted by a hope of world peace, economic stability, tolerance, and false justice, the eighth kingdom will be characterized by intolerance, war, a state-controlled economy, forced submission, totalitarianism, and chaos. It will be established by conquering the nations through a formidable military force, terrorism, and forced submission to totalitarian leadership.
 - b. The eighth kingdom will be characterized by the elimination of all religions except the antichrist's religion. The antichrist religion will be a radical form of Islam, and the nations will be forced to convert to this religion or face death. The antichrist will mandate worship for himself. The government will be a totalitarian dictatorship, and the economy will be a state-run and state-controlled economy using the mark of the beast to regulate buying and selling.
 - c. Therefore, to be clear, our belief is that the seventh kingdom will be a united global alliance of nations led by the elites of the earth and the eighth will be an Islamic Caliphate of which the antichrist will ultimately lead. Even though neither has fully formed, both are antichrist in nature and both are currently forming throughout the earth.
 7. Before moving on, a word of explanation about the connection between the queen of heaven and the spirit of antichrist will be helpful.
 - a. If you will remember from the last session, we spoke of the woman of Revelation 17, which the passage also refers to as the Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth (Rev. 17:5). Also, in the last session, we referred to this woman as a counterfeit bride and the spirit behind her as the queen of heaven. In this session, we spoke of the seventh kingdom as the harlot Babylon and the spirit behind this kingdom being the spirit of antichrist. Even though there might seem to be a contradiction, there is really not. Revelation 17:3 speaks of this woman sitting on a scarlet beast—the antichrist. Thus, we see that the woman and the beast at least at this point in history are cohorts, very closely connected, and they work together to seduce and oppose the saints of God.
 - b. Likewise, the spirits behind these two entities work together to accomplish the objective of opposing the rise of the true bride of Christ. As we have previously established, those spirits are the queen of heaven and the spirit of antichrist. At the risk of over simplifying, they work together to build the seventh kingdom, the harlot Babylon. The queen of heaven has as its primary function to defile the bride through attacks on the character and morality of the culture. Issues like abortion, sexual immorality, witchcraft, sexual perversion, and other societal issues come to mind. The queen's companion is the spirit of antichrist. The spirit of antichrist functions more in the legal, corporate, governmental, and other forms of public arenas to change laws, policies, and to take away freedoms. Therefore, they both work in tandem to oppose the bride arising and being made ready for the Lord.

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II. Discerning the Spirit of Antichrist

1. Understanding the spirit of antichrist will help us in our call to restrain its operation.

a. Now that we have explained our view of how the antichrist's kingdom will ultimately emerge, let's explore the demonic spirit empowering the formation of these kingdoms and Satan's opposition to the bride being made ready.

b. The apostle John wrote about the spirit which will ultimately empower the person of the antichrist, the opposition to God's people, and the formation of the seventh and eighth kingdoms, the spirit of antichrist. In his epistles, he referenced the idea of the antichrist four times. In fact, these are the only four verses in the bible where the word "antichrist" appears. They all add something to our discussion, so I list them all:

Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour (1 Jn. 2:18).

Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son (1 Jn. 2:22).

and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world (1 Jn. 4:3).

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist (2 Jn. 7).

c. In these passages, John confirms the ultimate coming of the person of the antichrist (1 Jn. 2:18) while stating that many antichrists have already come even at the time of his writing. He refers to those who have already come as people whom he referred to in other places as false prophets. Finally, he speaks of the spirit which motivated them as *the spirit of antichrist* (1 Jn. 4:3). In these passages, John also offers some traits of the spirit of antichrist. He spoke of the antichrists and the spirit of antichrist as *a liar who denies* that Jesus is the Messiah as well as denying the Father. He states that this spirit will *not confess* Jesus as being from God. He refers to this spirit as a *deceiving* spirit. Finally, he states that this spirit is already in the world.

d. The definition of the Greek word translated antichrist will add more understanding for us. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* defines *antichristos* to mean "against Christ" or "instead of Christ," or perhaps, combining the two, "one who, assuming the guise of Christ, opposes Christ".¹ Other definitions of the word are "an opponent of the Messiah"² and "an adversary of the Messiah"³.

e. From these definitions, we can readily observe that the spirit of antichrist is a demonic spirit that is opposed to or against Christ and everything that Christ desires to see accomplished in the earth. The spirit of antichrist is a major adversary of Christ who denies that He is the Messiah, the Son of God, and from the Father. The spirit attempts to deceive the people of the earth from following Christ so as to be led into false doctrine or to deny Christ entirely.

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f. The spirit of the antichrist is a demonic spirit that has influenced the earth throughout history and is still influencing the earth today. This spirit influences leaders, governments, religion, the economy, the media, the entertainment industry, political parties, the education system, and even technology—virtually every aspect of life—all for the purpose of causing the world to deny that Christ is the Son of God and to reject Christians and Jews alike. The spirit of antichrist works in tandem with the queen of heaven to seduce, resist, oppose, make illegal, and persecute God’s purposes and people and to remove God from every arena of the culture and everyday life.

2. The spirit of antichrist is at work today in individual lives and at an international level to oppose the bride being made ready.

- a. Repeating what we said earlier in the session, the spirit of antichrist is working in the earth today on two levels. First, it is opposing individuals and churches to keep believers entangled in the secular, even demonic culture and to keep them distracted, in compromise, and lawless, and even to seduce believers to fall away from the faith completely. All with the objective of keeping the bride from being made fully ready.
- b. Second, the spirit of antichrist is actively at work at a global level to build both the seventh and eighth kingdoms. Although the seventh kingdom of a new world order/global alliance of nations and the eighth kingdom of radical Islam are dramatically different in many ways, they are both heavily influenced by the spirit of antichrist. The spirit of antichrist is behind the building of both kingdoms. To summarize, even though neither the seventh kingdom nor the eighth has yet arisen, the spirit of antichrist is at work in both to create the necessary spiritual environment for them to arise. As with its opposition to individuals and churches, the objective is for Satan to continue to have authority over the nations and to oppose the bride being made ready.
- c. To help us discern how the spirit of antichrist might affect us individually and globally, we identify six common ways the spirit of antichrist works in today’s western society and ways in which it will increase as we approach the second coming of Christ.

3. First, the spirit of antichrist will deceive the earth into believing that the antichrist system is good for the world.

- a. The spirit of antichrist is a deceptive spirit. Both the apostle Paul and the apostle John refer to the spirit of antichrist as being deceptive. In Paul’s description of the antichrist, he records these words, “And with all the *deception* of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them *a deluding influence* so that *they will believe what is false*, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but *took pleasure in wickedness*” (2 Thess. 2:9-12).
- b. The spirit of antichrist will use deception so that multitudes welcome an antichristian society. People will be so greatly deceived that they will welcome an antichristian world view. In many ways, the spirit of antichrist will delude the world into believing that the antichrist system is the best direction for people’s lives, families, governments, and the world. The deception of the spirit of antichrist will be communicated in a convincing manner so that it seems to make sense to the masses.

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4. Second, the spirit of antichrist attempts to exalt man above God.

- a. Again, we draw from Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians. It reads, "The man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and *exalts himself above every so-called god* or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, *displaying himself as being God*" (2 Thess. 2:3-4).
- b. How this will ultimately work out is uncertain; even so, we see many instances in which man is being exalted above God and biblical truth. In the west, the spirit of antichrist is using our governments, educational systems, television, print and social media, the entertainment industry, and sports to exalt man above God. In a general sense, the spirit of antichrist will attempt to portray Jesus as a man and as a prophet, but not as the Son of God. It will not acknowledge Jesus as the true Messiah (2 Jn. 7). It will promote false messiahs other than Christ and deceive many, even the elect (24:5, 24). It will lead many people into lawlessness and will oppose God and the things of God (2 Thess. 2:2-4). It will employ flattery and will lead its followers to speak blasphemy against God (Dan. 11:32, 36).

5. Third, the spirit of antichrist denies that Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man.

- a. Jesus said that He is the way, the truth, and the life and that no one comes to the Father except through Him (Jn. 14:6). Along the same lines, Paul wrote these words, "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). The spirit of antichrist will deny this essential biblical truth. The world system will accept and tolerate virtually any form of religion except Judaism and biblical Christianity. This spirit will increasingly pressure leaders to push Christianity out of public life and to welcome other pagan, dead, or false religions. Christianity will be increasingly portrayed as radical, extreme, and a threat to world harmony.

6. Fourth, the spirit of antichrist will influence the world to think of Christians and Jews as strange, narrow-minded misfits who stand out from the culture of the masses.

- a. From the Book of Daniel, we read,

"There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, namely Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have disregarded you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up." Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego; then these men were brought before the king. Nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery and bagpipe and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, very well. But if you do not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?" (Dan. 3:12-15).

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- b. In the antichrist kingdom of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar would not tolerate the faith of Shadrack, Meshach, and Abed-nego demanding they forsake their faith to worship him. The same concept is taking place today. One of the phrases that is used often in the political circles of America is “out of the mainstream.” Politicians who are heavily influenced by the spirit of antichrist use that phrase to describe Christian judges, legislators, political candidates, and those who are sympathetic to Christian causes like stopping abortion, opposing homosexual marriage, and removal of God from our public square.
- c. This spirit will attempt to label people who stand for God as narrow-minded, bigoted, and prejudiced, often being accused of not accepting others or not having compassion. All of this will happen to paint Jews and Christians as those who oppose the things that the masses believe are good for the world.

7. Fifth, the spirit of antichrist influences leaders to change laws in order to rule God out of government.

- a. While Darius the Mede was king, Daniel recorded the following, "All the commissioners of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the high officials and the governors have consulted together that the king should *establish a statute and enforce an injunction that anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, shall be cast into the lions' den. Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document so that it may not be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked. Therefore King Darius signed the document, that is, the injunction*" (Dan. 6:7-9).
- b. Along the lines of the above quote, Daniel wrote of the fourth beast who will arise in the end-times, "He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and *in law*; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time" (Dan. 7:25).
- c. In America today, a primary way that the spirit of antichrist is pushing Christianity from the culture is by changing laws, rules, and policies. Prayer and Bible reading have been banned from our schools, the Ten Commandments have been prohibited from the courthouses, abortion has been legalized, and homosexual marriage has been made the law of the land. Laws have been changed to accomplish these things. In addition, rules and policies for social media platforms, TV and radio personalities, and reporters are being changed to push Christian and even conservative thought out of the public arena.
- d. The spirit of antichrist attempts to change the institutions that once allowed freedom of speech and the practice of Biblical Christianity so that Christian beliefs and actions are prohibited. All of this is for the purpose of preparing the world for the outright persecution of both Christians and Jews.

8. Sixth, the spirit of antichrist leads leaders to openly persecute Jews and Christians.

- a. Speaking of the end times, Jesus said, "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will *kill* you, and you will be *hated* by all nations because of My name" (Matt. 24:9).

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- b. The book of Daniel records these passages about the antichrist,

"In the latter period of their rule, when the transgressors have run their course, a king will arise, insolent and skilled in intrigue. His power will be mighty, but not by his own power, and he will destroy to an extraordinary degree and prosper and perform his will; *he will destroy mighty men and the holy people*. And through his shrewdness he will cause deceit to succeed by his influence; and he will magnify himself in his heart, and *he will destroy many while they are at ease*" (Dan. 8:23-25).

"By smooth words he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action. Those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; *yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder for many days*. Now when they fall they will be granted a little help, and many will join with them in hypocrisy. *Some of those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge and make them pure until the end time*; because it is still to come at the appointed time" (Dan. 11:32-35).

- c. As it is in certain parts of the earth, this persecution includes physical torture and murder. In other places, it is now manifesting as a religious war of beliefs or as persecution in the work place, schools, and governments. The goal of the spirit of antichrist is ultimately to remove all semblances of Christ from all of society and to persecute and kill Christians and Jews alike.
- d. As you can easily see, the spirit of antichrist is already at work in many very significant ways throughout the earth, and the praying church is called to restrain the works of this spirit.

III. Restraining the Spirit of Antichrist

1. The church and, more specifically, an eternal purpose house of prayer is called to restrain the spirit of antichrist.

- a. In the context of the second coming of Christ, Paul wrote these words which we referenced at the beginning of the session,

Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And you know what restrains him [the antichrist] now, so that in his time he will be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only *he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way*. Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming (2 Thess. 2:5-8).

- b. Paul is telling us that the spirit of antichrist has and is at work in the earth. Even though the spirit of antichrist is actively working, it is being restrained from being released in fullness until God's timing. For the purposes of this session, it is important to understand the meaning of the phrase "he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way". Let's attempt to understand the meaning of this phrase.
- c. Before looking at the meaning of the words in this passage, we should be clear that this is one of the most difficult passages to interpret. New Testament scholar Craig Keener says there are over 30 different interpretations of this verse. Some state that the restrainer is a nation, such as America,

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who is restraining evil until the Lord's fixed date. Others have said the restrainer is the archangel Michael, who is restraining the devil until God's timing. Many evangelicals who believe in a pretribulation rapture say the restrainer is the Holy Spirit who will be removed whenever the church is raptured to heaven. For example, well respected theologian Robert Thomas writes the following,

The identification of the restrainer with deep roots in church history is most appealing. The special presence of the Spirit as the indweller of saints will terminate abruptly at the *Parousia* as it began abruptly at Pentecost. Once the body of Christ has been caught away to heaven the Spirit's ministry will revert back to what he did for believers during the OT period. His function of restraining evil through the body of Christ will cease similarly as he terminated his striving during the days of Noah.⁴

- d. In supporting his position, Thomas refers in 2 Thessalonians to a shift from the neuter gender to the masculine of the restraining force. The Greek word *katechon* which is the word translated *restrain* in 2 Thessalonians 2:5-8 means to hold down, to hold back, detain, or restrain.⁵ According to Thomas, *katechon* in 2 Thessalonians 2:6 appears in the neuter gender whereas *katechon* in 2 Thessalonians 2:7 appears in the masculine. If I interpret his commentary correctly, his point in making the distinction is that verse 6 suggests that there is *a restraining force* at work to restrain the antichrist until God's timing is completed whereas verse 7 adds the element of *a person* involved in the restraining process. From this he draws his conclusion with this quote,

It is evident that the restrainer, to accomplish his mission, must have supernatural power to hold back a supernatural enemy. God and the outworking of his providence is the natural answer...Yet to say that God is the restrainer is not quite enough to explain the variation in gender.⁶

- e. He completes his analysis with the position referred to in the above quote in which he refers to the restrainer as the Holy Spirit working through the church.
- f. If we modify the above explanation slightly with our understanding of the coming forth of the corporate man of Revelation 12, our opinion is that the restrainer is the praying church who is on the journey of making itself ready as the mature corporate man/prepared bride. You will note from the reading of Revelation 12-14 that when the manchild comes forth in fullness, the manchild will be caught up to heaven and immediately the dragon will be cast to earth and the beast [antichrist] will arise. Of course, this suggests that it is the church on the journey of making itself ready as manchild/bride is that part of the church who will restrain the antichrist from arising.
- g. However, it is not just the fact that the manchild is arising that restrains the antichrist; moreover, it is also the prayers of the church that are necessary. Remember from prior sessions that not only must the corporate man mature and the bride be made ready, but also the golden bowls of incense must be filled with prayers of the saints. Thus, our interpretation of the passage in 2 Thessalonians is that *the one who restrains is the church on a journey toward maturity who is praying eternal purpose prayers offered in agreement with the prayers coming through the man Christ at the heavenly golden altar.*
- h. Until the events of Revelation 12 transpire, the overcoming church and an eternal purpose house of prayer must take up the call to restrain the spirit of antichrist. As the Church takes up its authority and stands, it can and will restrain the forces, issues, traits, mindsets, organizations, movements, and activities planned by the spirit of antichrist.

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2. There is a serious debate about whether or how the church should address issues in which the government and societal leaders oppose Christian liberty.

- a. It is important to take a moment to address an issue which will affect how or if we pray to restrain the spirit of antichrist. Remember we spoke previously of the spirit of antichrist working through governmental issues, laws, and policies. Many believers think of taking a stand concerning and praying into governmental and even societal issues as something with which the church should not involve itself. Others believe that praying for governments and cultural issues are acceptable prayer topics, but not essential ones. Many believe that the church should focus its prayers only on issues like evangelism, discipleship, the ministries of the Church, and revival. Our position is that we must pray into topics related to oppressive societal issues and tyrannical governments. In praying into these types of issues fueled by governmental laws and decrees, media censorship and restrictions, educational and healthcare prohibitions, and the like, we can do our part to restrain the spirit of antichrist.
- b. Because the question of should the church stand against and even involve itself with what is going on in our progressively antichristian governments and societal restrictions, we want to briefly address our view of how an eternal purpose house of prayer must engage cultural and governmental issues. Let's begin by referencing a brief passage from the book of Romans that speaks about the role of the church as it relates to secular governments,

Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves (Rom. 13:1-2).

- c. At first glance, this passage seems to state that the church should not oppose antichristian governmental issues. Our position on this passage is different. Here is our interpretation. As new believers were coming into the kingdom, many believed that they were no longer under the authority of the kingdoms of man but of the kingdom of God. Because of this view, many thought that there was no longer a mandate to obey the laws of the governments where they lived. The apostle Paul was addressing this issue telling believers that they still must live under the governments where they lived, and doing so led to a peaceful life.
- d. However, the question arises of what do believers do when the government opposes their Christian values. The following quote from *The New American Commentary* on Romans 13 summarize our position very well,

Government sometimes oversteps its rightful domain. When this happens, the believer will find it impossible to obey the ruler. Two clear examples of civil disobedience are found in Acts. When Peter and John were told by the Sanhedrin not to preach in the name of Jesus, they replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God" (Acts 4:19). Upon being released they resumed their work and consequently were taken into custody. To the charge of the Sanhedrin that they had filled Jerusalem with their teaching they replied, "we must obey God rather than man!" (Acts 5:19). The believer's ultimate allegiance is to God. Whenever the demands of secular society clearly violate this higher allegiance, the Christian will act outside the law.⁷

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- e. With this as our guide, our position is that in a general sense, believers must stand strong and be a voice into governmental and societal issues that oppose true Christian ideals. Forerunners must be a voice in those arenas that are quickly and strongly rising up against the church being free to practice its faith in freedom and truth. In the context of an eternal purpose house of prayer, believers most definitely must also pray and engage in spiritual warfare into these same arenas.

3. Our call is to pray into the *issues* empowered by the spirit of antichrist, not to address the spirit directly.

- a. A later session will go into much depth on how to safely engage in spiritual warfare against the queen of heaven, the spirit of antichrist, and other demonic entities. For now, let me make a few simple statements about how to resist and restrain the queen of heaven and the spirit of antichrist. Unless specifically led by the Holy Spirit to do so, we do not address these spirits directly. Rather, we pray into the issues that arise from their evil plans.
- b. Let me share two examples that I believe would fall into the category of restraining the spirit of antichrist to help us understand. First, in our opinion, the 2020 presidential election was fraudulently determined. We believe if there had been an accurate vote count, President Trump would have won overwhelmingly. We also believe that the Biden presidency has the objective to dramatically advance the one-world, globalist agenda whereas Trump was focused on a much more nationalist agenda. As such, Biden's presidency was motivated by the spirit of antichrist. Because of this and the prophetic words to the effect that God's will was for Trump to have a second term, we prayed fervently for the exposure of the fraud and the true results of the election to come to light. November and December of 2020 and January 2021 were the most intense time of intercession our church has ever had. We prayed fervently several nights a week. It was powerful. But to my remembrance, we never confronted a territorial spirit. We prayed into the issues themselves. By praying for the issues, we were in fact engaging in the spiritual warfare with the spirit of antichrist.
- c. A second example is the global push to force people to get vaccinated against Covid. Even though I have a personal opinion about the vaccination, my point is not whether the vaccination is good or bad. Rather, it is about government overreach to force people to get vaccinated in order to function in society. Issues like requiring vaccinations to travel, to get employment, to attend events, and to even go into stores are becoming more commonplace. In my opinion, the pressure is being levied upon the people for the purpose of control by an antichristian global movement that will progressively take away individual rights, preparing the way for control to be exercised by the antichrist in days ahead. In cases like these, our prayer focus would not be directly focused on the spirit of antichrist, but on issues related to the governmental push toward requiring vaccinations.
- d. I hope these examples will help us have clarity how to restrain the spirit of antichrist. Therefore, to summarize, we pray into issues and do not directly confront world ruling spirits unless directed by the Holy Spirit.

4. Therefore, any and all of the ways that the spirit of antichrist manifests today become prayer topics for restraining this spirit.

- a. At the risk of being repetitive, prayer topics for restraining this spirit and the many ways it appears today can include, but certainly are not limited to,

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- Praying against deceit in our governments especially those action which underhandedly attempt to overthrow biblical principles and the values that Christians hold.
 - Praying against the rise of a global government.
 - Praying against the political spirit in the land which holds to a deceptive agenda and tries to push Christianity and its values out of the mainstream of the culture.
 - Praying against the false influence of antichristian institutions such as the press, media, entertainment, social media, and educational system.
 - Praying against the altering of laws, rules, and policies that oppose the free expression of Christianity and biblical values.
 - Praying against corruption in governments, legal systems, and courts that are being used to come against those standing for truth.
 - Praying against the raise of an Islamic caliphate.
 - Praying against the persecution of Christians and Jews.
 - Praying to expose the true agendas of those promulgating an antichrist agenda.
 - Praying against the accuser of the brethren that targets those standing for truth.
- b. As you can see, the tentacles of this spirit are many. Yet as Daniel wrote, “But it is in these days that the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits” (Dan 11:32, NKJV). As such God’s people are to stand strong against the emergence of this spirit and its many manifestations. Regardless of the topics the church is asked to pray for, we must heed the call to engage in spiritual warfare against both the queen of heaven and the spirit of antichrist.
- c. It is imperative that the Church move beyond the passivity that is typically displayed. Many think that the antichrist will arise anyway because the Bible says he will, and therefore, there is no need to restrain because end-time events are predetermined. Others do not see the connection between how the spirit of antichrist is influencing the world today and how this is slowly preparing the world for the rule of the beast. Though these events will take place at some point, God is calling His Church to restrain these things from taking place prematurely. He is calling those who know Him to restrain the spirit of antichrist. So, let an eternal purpose house of prayer restrain the spirit of antichrist.

¹ Antichrist, Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

² Antichrist, Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006, 2010 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.)

³ Antichrist, Thayer's Greek Lexicon, PC Study Bible formatted Electronic Database. Copyright © 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc.

⁴ Robert Thomas, Expositors Bible Commentary of 1,2 Thessalonians, 1,2 Timothy, Titus, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1996, pp. 98-99.

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⁵ *Katechon*, Strong's NT 2722, Abbott-Smith Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament. PC Study Bible formatted electronic database Copyright © 2014 by Biblesoft, Inc.

⁶ Thomas, p.98.

⁷ Romans, The New American Commentary, Vol. 27, Robert H. Mounce, Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995, p. 244.