

Charts: The Third Parenthetical Visions: Chart #15

PREFACE

In our previous session we looked at the first four verses of Chapter Twelve, which introduced two “signs”:

- the woman “clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars,” a sign representing the restored nation of undivided Israel, and
- the red dragon “having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems,” a second sign representing both Satan and the confederation of states organized under the leadership of Antichrist.

In this session we will look at the continuation of the sign of the woman, and her “birth” of the Messiah, and her need to flee into the wilderness for safety. Then we will begin the continuation of the dragon sign: the war in heaven between Satan and the archangel Michael.

The time frame in Chapter Twelve is quite fluid, not just pointing forward or backward in time but doing so with abandon from one verse to the next—and especially in the first six verses. Verses 1-6 seem to serve as an overview of the entire chapter, with vv7-17 backing up and expanding the narrative with more details.

Chapter Twelve as a whole, but especially vv1-6, is an enactment of the prophecy set down by God Himself back in Genesis 3.

The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, And dust you will eat All the days of your life; And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.” (Genesis 3:14-15)

The serpent, representing Satan, would indeed bruise the seed of the woman (Messiah)—i.e., an *injurious* blow; but Messiah would ultimately “crush” the head of Satan—i.e., a *fatal* blow. As it was and will be played out, Christ Jesus (“the seed” of the woman) was indeed killed, but was raised to life, and ultimately will reign over all things in an eternal kingdom, while Christ’s adversary will go down to defeat, and an eternal life in fire.

Read Revelation 12:5-6.

As I mentioned in passing last week, v5 is a remarkable condensation, in just one sentence, of the redemptive life of Christ Jesus, beginning with His birth on earth and ending with His glorification in heaven.

And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.

One would imagine (as I am sure Satan did) that a huge, fierce dragon crouched in waiting would hold the advantage over a woman in the travails of childbirth—not to mention the advantage over a newborn. Alas, Satan’s best is for naught when matched against the Son of God.

That the Messiah would be born of Israel, a descendant of David, was foretold by various OT prophets (cf. [Michah 5:2](#)), and His Jewish lineage is emphasized in both OT and NT (cf. [Matthew 1](#)). Plus, for dispensationalists especially, it is poetically appropriate that this picture of Israel giving birth to the Messiah would be included here; the Tribulation is the time of “*Jacob’s trouble*”:

'Alas! for that day is great,
There is none like it;
And it is the time of Jacob's distress,
But he will be saved from it.
It shall come about on that day,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'that I will break his yoke from off their neck and will tear off their bonds; and strangers will no longer make them their slaves. But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.' (Jeremiah 30:7-9)

who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron

Here the vision quotes Psalm 2.

Read Psalm 2:7-9.

A rod of iron is hard, solid, unyielding. And that fact draws us into a deeper consideration of the word translated “rule” in some passages and versions, and “break” in others. By so doing we get a clearer picture of the sort of millennial rule conducted by Christ Jesus. The word in the Greek is *poimaino*, (peh-men-oh) which, on the surface, has a pastoral meaning: to act as a shepherd. But it also carries with it the connotation of “destroy,” or shatter, as we see in Psalm 2:9 (Hebrew, *raa*) and in Revelation 2:27 (same Greek as in 12:5, *poimaino*).

...AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father; (Revelation 2:27).

Here Messiah's millennial rule is described: He will rule the earth, the nations, with justice and mercy, but will suffer no fools; those who rebel against the King will be broken, they will be shattered as a cheap clay pot is shattered by one stroke—not to be repaired, but to be thrown onto the ash heap. As MacArthur puts it, "The phrase 'rod of iron' speaks of the resoluteness of Christ's rule; He will swiftly and immediately judge all sin and put down any rebellion."

And, even though I have repeatedly pointed it out, is there *really* that much difference between Jesus in His first *parousia* and Christ the King in His second? In His first time on earth Jesus was gracious, patient, and forgiving to the humble and truly repentant, but at the same time He could quickly and publicly condemn and rebuke the religious hypocrites ([Matthew 23](#)). Even as "the Lamb," Christ did not suffer fools.

As we leave v5, note that in this one sentence time moves from the birth of Christ in Bethlehem, forward to Christ's millennial reign, then back again to His ascension to the Father.

v6

On a same note, Henry Alford points out that the whole of v6 does the same thing as regards time sequence.

Alford: "may nourish her there for a thousand two hundred and sixty days" (the whole of this verse is anticipatory: the same incident being repeated with its details and in its own place in the order of the narrative below, Revelation 12:13 ff. The fact of its being here inserted by anticipation is very instructive as to that which now next follows, as not being consecutive in time after the flight of the woman, but occurring before it, and in fact referred to now in the prophecy as leading to that pursuit of the woman by the dragon, which, as matter of sequence, led to it).

Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

Sidebar: In the general milieu of Bible study, there seems to be something different—something *extremely* different—where it comes to the study of The Revelation. I have never before experienced—in studies of Hebrews, the Thessalonian letters, Colossians, Philippians, Galatians, and First Corinthians, for example—such an alienation from, or abandonment by, so many heretofore useful scholars. There is something peculiar about Revelation, sufficiently singular that many reliable sources for *other* studies leave one standing alone in the dust.

(Sidebar cont.) In a moment I will be directing us to the Olivet Discourse, found in Matthew 24; in preparation for that I turned to D. A. Carson’s massive commentary on the first gospel—and was immediately reminded that this highly regarded (and rightly so) scholar does not even see the end times in what Jesus says—only what happened to Jerusalem in AD 70, even though Jesus’ discourse to his disciples is in answer to their question, “Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” ([Matthew 24:3](#)).

Now, I have sat spellbound while listening to some of Carson’s discourses on Scripture; he can make this book *glow* with wonder and amazement. One comes away amazed, and supremely edified by the way he can weave together passages in God’s word and bring it to life. He deserves the respect he receives. Yet, listening to what he had to say in a lengthy series of lectures on The Revelation, I finally had to turn him off. I just couldn’t take any more. All this to say, if you think what we have been studying so far has been confusing, and a challenge to apprehend, it is *nothing* compared to your confusion and frustration if you mixed in all the other theories and positions out there. The solution, in my modest opinion, is to decide where you stand on the Eschaton, and then stick with it.

As Alford points out, this episode is fleshed out in v13 and following. Jesus also spoke of this very moment to His disciples in His Olivet Discourse, found in Matthew 24. [Let’s begin with v15, where Jesus quotes Daniel.](#)

Read Matthew 24:15-21.

In that gospel passage we have several mile-markers in what Jesus said that tie it not just to the Eschaton, but to our passage in 12:6 and 12:13ff specifically.

- “abomination of desolation” ... “standing in the holy place”; i.e., Antichrist, the servant of Satan, taking his seat of power in the Jerusalem temple, as well as the installment of his statue as the object of worship
- “flee to the mountains”; i.e., “the woman [[Israel](#)] fled into the wilderness”
- “there will be a great tribulation”; i.e., the last three and one half years of the Tribulation

Beyond these, the entire discourse is wrapped in a warning to beware of false messiahs:

- vv4-5: “See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many”;
- v24: “For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect”—a clear reference to the time of Antichrist, considering the context.

God’s word does not tell us where God will hide and/or protect Israel, and I see little point in trying to guess. The important take-away is what God is doing for His chosen people—not its location.

A study of the Last Things serves to reinforce two truths of Scripture, but truths that are often forgotten or set aside by the Christian church. To wit,

- No matter how much He has chastised them, and will pour out His wrath on their rebellion against Him, the Lord God loves Israel—as a father loves his children. He always has and always will. The church does not replace Israel in the Lord’s affections; Israel remains His chosen people, but those of Israel that steadfastly refuse to accept Jesus as the promised Messiah will join Gentiles in perdition.

The apostle Paul wrote in Romans 11:25-27,

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; **and so all Israel will be saved**; just as it is written, “THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.” “THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.” (emphasis added)

God will make a *new* covenant with Israel, and unlike the first, this covenant will be unconditional. We may not understand all the details of this (and we will not delve deeper for the moment), but there will come a point in time—and I see no reason to doubt it will be during this time of protection during the last half of the Tribulation—when God will Himself change the heart of Israel as a nation regarding Christ Jesus. The prophet Jeremiah prophesied,

“But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. “They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jeremiah 31:33–34).

Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse: The second covenant is to make new men of Israel. A nation will be born in a day. God will put His law into their inward parts and write it in their hearts. He will be their God and they shall be His people. God will manifest His sovereign electing grace on a national scale in behalf of Israel, even as He showed His sovereign elective grace on a personal scale to those who believed in Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Somewhere around the middle of the Tribulation God will remove Israel from the direct danger from Antichrist in Jerusalem. He will protect “her,” and twice we are told, in v6 and v14, that she would be not just protected but “nourished” (*trephosin*, to feed, cause to grow, to bring up, to rear) until the climactic return of the Messiah. In light of that tender mercy shown to His chosen, it is not stretching the imagination at all that this three-and-one-half-year period will also be when God will, as Ezekiel prophesied, “give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God” (Ezekiel 11:19-20)—this in preparation for the return of their new Lord, Jesus, their true and only Christ.

- The second truth reinforced is that Jerusalem is truly the navel of the world; in God’s eyes, it is the most important city on earth. Remember how Christ Jesus lamented the city’s rejection of Him: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling” (Matthew 23:37). And what city will be the focal point of the new earth, where God the Father and Son will one day take up residence? New York? Paris? London? No, Jerusalem.

The passage before us—vv7-17—is profound, disturbing, and challenges many of our predisposed thoughts on heaven and hell, God and Satan, their respective angels, and their respective domains. For just one example, ask the average person on the street, “Where is Satan right now?” He will surely answer that Satan is the one in charge of hell, but that is not true. Satan has not yet even visited hell, much less been the resident master of it. The first and only time he will be in hell, is when it becomes his fiery residence for all eternity.

At the other end of the spectrum, even believers can have a rather sterilized perception of heaven, but especially those unfamiliar with God's word can imagine that heaven is simply unending sweetness and light, interrupted only by sunshine baths in fields of daisies or dreamy walks along the seashore. Even for those who regularly study the Bible it can be shocking to read of "war in heaven" where these two cosmic extremes collide.

Thus it would be unwise to plow ahead into this passage as an abbreviated coda to this session. Instead I would like to use our remaining time to outline the coming passage, approaching the forest from the long view, before we begin examining the bark on each tree in our next session. [So please follow along with me.](#)

John MacArthur claims that Chapters 12-14 of The Revelation (the parenthetical visions) recapitulate the events of Chapters 6-11 (the Seals and the Trumpets) viewing them this time from Satan's perspective. I am not yet convinced that's the best way to look at this section, but we'll see. He also organizes vv7-12 into three sections: the battle, the victory, and the celebration. Yet in the following vv13-17 Satan is enraged and still hard at work trying to do his worst to Israel.

Celebration indeed.

In vv1-6 we were introduced to The woman (Israel), the red dragon (Satan), and the issue from the woman, the male child (Messiah). Now in v7 is introduced the fourth principal character in this drama: Michael the archangel, who leads the holy angels against the rebellion of Satan's evil angels. Verses 7-9 comprise the first unit: the war is fought, Satan's forces lose, and are "thrown down to the earth."

Read vv7-9.

Verses 10-12a narrate the victory celebration in and for heaven—but do not read more into this than is there. Heaven has at last been rid of the pollution from Satan and His angelic followers; the rejoicing is meant for those environs.

Read vv10-12a.

There is no similar rejoicing on the earth, for that is where all that evil now calls home.

Read vv12b.

There is a line in the final Harry Potter movie that perfectly describes the situation in v12. Harry—who has a supernatural connection to the mind of the bad guy, Lord Voldemort—is explaining to Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger how Voldemort is presently “feeling” to him.

“He’s angry, and scared too. He knows if we find and destroy all the horcruxes we’ll be able to kill him. I reckon he’ll stop at nothing to make sure that we don’t find the rest... There’s something wrong with him. In the past I’ve always been able to follow his thoughts, and now everything just feels disconnected.”

[Ron suggests,] “Maybe he’s very weak and maybe he’s dying.”

[Harry replies,] “No. No, it’s more like he’s wounded. If anything he feels more dangerous.”

That is where we are at in v12. Satan is not crippled; he is not discouraged, ready to give up. If anything he is now dramatically more dangerous than ever before. He is now *enraged*, “knowing he has only a short time.” In v13 he renews his attack on Israel.

Read v13.

And here we are given more details on what we read in v6. But note that Satan is still not giving up.

Read vv14-16.

At last he must give up his onslaught on this protected remnant of Israel, but, enraged all the more, he storms off to inflict his worst on “the rest of her children.”

Read v17.

This section reveals a period of three and one half years in which Satan is markedly more dangerous to man than he has ever been before. He truly is a fire-breathing dragon—or, as the apostle Peter put it, “Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8b).

[In our next session we will begin an examination of this section.](#)