

Charts: The Third Parenthetical Visions: Chart #15, with Chart #11.

PREFACE

When last we were in Chapter Twelve of the Revelation ([vv10-12a](#)), Satan and his army of evil angels had just been defeated and forever cast out of heaven. What followed was a time of rejoicing, and an occasion to celebrate heaven as one step closer to realizing “the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ.” Though the war was won by angels, the celebration is voiced by those who benefit the most from the victory—humans—for this is a Christ-centric moment: the righteous result of this war is credited to “the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.” That is, the sacrifice of Christ Jesus on the cross is both the *reason* Michael and his angels won the victory over Satan, and from which the *resolve of the persecuted on earth* has and will come.

This passage (in-artfully, in my opinion) bridges heaven and earth; the impetus for the celebration is the victory in heaven over Satan, but the celebration is voiced by humans specifically referencing how “the blood of the lamb” empowered believers on earth during the Tribulation to overcome Satan’s power. Wisely this human choir limits the rejoicing to the precincts of heaven, for there will be little reason for rejoicing on earth for the next few years. For Satan was not just thrown *out* of heaven, but thrown *down to earth*.

Read Revelation 12:12-14.

Before we dig into this passage, let’s reestablish our timeline.

<View Chart #11>

- The seventh trumpet of the trumpet judgments has already sounded. Verse 14 of Chapter Eleven announces that “The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly.” The first and second “woes” were the fifth and sixth trumpets, respectively; the “third woe” is the seventh trumpet consisting of the bowl judgments.
- In v15 the trumpet sounds: “Then the seventh angel sounded...” followed immediately by a heavenly chorus announcing that this moment is a turning point; even though there still remains the second half of the Tribulation, from heaven’s perspective the sounding of this seventh trumpet marks the beginning of the end, and the coming of Christ’s reign over His kingdom.

(Parenthetically, one gets the impression that all of heaven is so eager for that kingdom that they repeatedly announce it well in advance of its literal occurrence.)

[<View Chart #15>](#)

- Verse 15 marks the beginning of what I have termed the “third parenthetical visions,” which, taking up just over four chapters in the Revelation, separate the *sounding* of the trumpet from the actual *pouring out* of the seven bowls of wrath.
- We are now poised, in this session, to conclude the third vision in this four-chapter extended passage, which began at v1 of Chapter Twelve. Verses 1-6 gave us the shorthand version of this episode; we now conclude the more detailed version of vv7-17: the miraculous saving of the Israel remnant from an enraged Satan.

vv13-14

And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child.

That this will be a perilous time for Israel is apparent in that it is she whom Satan seeks out first upon being thrown out of heaven. “Having great wrath” (v12) translates not *orge*, but the Greek *thymos*. Walvoord helps us understand the difference.

The word for “wrath” means a strong passion or emotion but carries less weight than *orge*. It is an emotional rather than a rational state of mind and stems from his own awareness that his days are numbered.

We enter now what the prophet Jeremiah called, “the time of Jacob’s distress.”

[Turn with me to Jeremiah 30.](#)

Read Jeremiah 30:3-7.

So much of what is going on in this moment, this episode of the Eschaton, for Israel specifically, is centered on the Messiah. If you are a living Jew around the middle of the Tribulation on earth, your fate—your *eternal* fate—will be determined by your decision regarding Messiah. Is the historic Jesus of Nazareth the promised Messiah for Israel, or are you waiting for another? If for you Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Messiah, you will most likely take refuge in a place God has prepared for you in the wilderness, safe from Satan’s persecution. Life for you will not be easy, but you will survive.

If, on the other hand, you are a Jew who rejects Jesus as the Christ, you will be persecuted, most likely tortured, and die. Having rejected Jesus as the Messiah, you will be among those consigned to the lake of fire at the final judgment.

The prophet Zechariah informs us that this second, unbelieving group will constitute *two-thirds* of the nation of Israel, with the remaining one-third saved.

Zechariah 13:8–9: “It will come about in all the land,” Declares the LORD, “That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; But the third will be left in it. “And I will bring the third part through the fire, Refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them; I will say, ‘They are My people,’ And they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’”

John MacArthur organizes Satan’s campaign against Israel into three attacks, and I think that is a helpful way to picture it, for, indeed, that is how John presents it:

- Attack One: 12:13-14
- Attack Two: 12:15-16
- Attack Three: 12:17

Attack One: Pursuit

The word translated “persecuted” in the NASB and NKJV means to put to flight, to pursue, as it is translated in the ESV and NIVs.

Note: Though we will not discuss it in-depth until we get to Chapter Thirteen, I just want to point out that, as Jesus describes in Matthew 24, at this point in time the “abomination of desolation” is now “standing in the holy place.” That is, the statue of Antichrist is now standing and being worshiped in the Jerusalem temple.

Read Matthew 24:15-21.

We can well imagine the frantic chaos occurring in Judea and the Middle East. Jesus tells them, “*Just run!*”

v14: But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.

The late, great professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford and author of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, J. R. R. Tolkien, portrays in his books this imagery literally, sending giant eagles to swoop in and rescue the good guys at the last minute. God’s word uses the imagery to express either rescue—“He spread His wings and caught them, He carried them on His pinions” (Deuteronomy 32:11)—or protection—“Let me dwell in Your tent forever; Let me take refuge in the shelter of Your wings” (Psalm 61:4)—neither of which refer to literal avian flight. And so here.

Here the imagery means that God, by whatever means, will facilitate the escape of this remnant from Israel to a safe place in the wilderness. Some have conjectured as to how and to where, but that really misses the point, which is that God Himself is determined to save a portion of Messianic Israel from the rage of Satan. In this He will be successful. How and where we are not told, but we *are* told for how long: “for a time and times and half a time.” That is, for three-and-one-half years. There this remnant will not just be held safe from Satan and his angels, but will be “nourished” (*trepho*, fed, reared, nurtured, made to grow—implied, their numbers will grow).

from the presence [face] of the serpent.

Satan will not find them. They will not see his face.

v15-16

Read Revelation 12:15-17.

Attack Two: A River

Thwarted by God in his pursuit of Messianic Israel, Satan tries a different, more long-range tactic: he sends their way what is termed “water like a river”—a different sort of pursuit.

v15: And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood.

Though it is true we have striven to interpret most of the Revelation text literally, sensibly, the *sensible* interpretation of this passage in this case would be to accept much of it as being told using figurative language, for the whole thing is literally drenched in it. In this episode

- Satan is not an angel, but a dragon and serpent;
- Israel is not a nation, but a woman;
- Israel does not run into the wilderness, but flies there on “two wings of the great eagle”;
- It is hidden and protected not for three-and-one-half years, but “for a time and times and half a time”.

Rather than struggling to make literal sense of a “serpent pour[ing] water like a river out of his mouth,” we must take this to mean what it often means in the symbolic language of the OT. For example, Job describes the perils of the wicked man with, “He lies down rich, but never again; He opens his eyes, and it is no longer. Terrors overtake him like a flood; A tempest steals him away in the night” (Job 27:19-20).

Read Jeremiah 46:7-8.

The imagery is even more obvious in the next chapter of Jeremiah.

Read Jeremiah 47:1-4a.

There the armies of Egypt are pictured, in their destruction of the Philistines, as “waters rising,” “an overflowing torrent.” Thus we can easily apply a similar “reality on the ground” to this second pursuit by the armies of Satan. Perhaps he thought his initial attack would be swift and decisive with a relatively small force—a mistake many generals and political leaders continue to make. When that fails, Satan musters a larger, more comprehensive force to attack Israel with far greater numbers. But once again, God protects His children.

v16: But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth.

Because He has done this before—in the Numbers narrative in which the Lord strikes the families of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram for their rebellion—we are free to interpret this more literally.

Read Numbers 16:30-33.

We can easily picture the intervention of God in his protection of Israel, commanding the earth to open and “[drink] up the river” of demonic angels flooding in to attack Israel. The Lord God may even implement this destruction by means of one of the many earthquakes inflicted on the earth during the Tribulation. He does not *need* to employ “natural” means, but He could.

Attack Three: A Seek and Destroy Mission

v17: So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

Finally, Satan storms off in a huff. Like King Ramses at the shore of the Red Sea in *The Ten Commandments*, he sends his troops to their doom, but spares himself by declaring that “this is not the job for a king,” thereby saving himself from the carnage. In v17, after witnessing what happens to his troops, the frustrated and enraged Satan does an about-face and heads off in search of victims elsewhere—“to make war with the rest of [Israel’s] children.”

Opinions vary on what is meant when John expands on the words “her children” with “who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.” Most of our modern versions translate this correctly as “the *rest* of her children (or seed, *spermatos*, that which is sown). The KJV “remnant” perhaps implies a protected group, which is not the case. The word is *loipon*, meaning the rest, the remaining, which could refer to just about anyone other than those that are being specifically sheltered by God.

As to the delineating phrase, “who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus,” let’s work backward. Those “who...hold to the testimony of Jesus” obviously refers to Christians, and MacArthur points out that this refers not to testimony *about* Him, “but the testimony He gave, the truths He taught that are revealed in the New Testament.” That is, people who hold to the teachings and commandments of Christ Jesus.

But to who does it refer with “who keep the commandments of God”? On the surface at least we might logically conclude this refers to Jews who keep the commands set forth by God through Moses in the Pentateuch. Thus, taken together, this verse would seem to refer to those who do both: i.e., Messianic Jews.

If that be the case, we should expect to see some etymological connection between the word used here—the Greek *entolas*—and references to the commandments in the OT. And we find that connection in the words of Jesus in the gospel accounts. In Matthew, in His conversation with a lawyer, who asks Him,

“Teacher, which is the great **commandment** in the Law?” And He said to him, “**YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.**’ This is the great and foremost **commandment**. The second is like it, ‘**YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.**’ On these two **commandments** depend the whole Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:36-40, emphasis added)

In all three instances Jesus is specifically referring to the Ten Commandments using the same word *entolas*. He used the same word again when answering the Pharisees about divorce.

They said, “Moses permitted a man TO WRITE A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY.” But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this **commandment.**” (Mark 10:4-5, emphasis added)

In the gospel of John, however, Jesus also uses the word to refer to *His* commandments. For example, “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.” (John 15:12)

MacArthur interprets this verse as being all-inclusive, that is, Jews and Gentile Christians. But I favor the position of John Walvoord, who writes,

Walvoord: While the program of Satan is against the Jewish race as such, anti-Semitism as a whole will reach its peak against Jewish *believers* during this period. There is a double antagonism against those in Israel who turn to Christ as their Messiah and Saviour in those critical days and maintain a faithful witness. Undoubtedly many of them will suffer a martyr's death, but others will survive the period including the 144,000 sealed in chapter 7.

Following Boolean logic, the text does not say "or," but "and," which means that *both conditions* need to be true. Thus I interpret this verse, with Walvoord, as speaking specifically of *Messianic Jews* as the prey of Satan during the second half of the Tribulation. That is not to say that other Jews and Gentiles will not suffer as well, but Satan marks out the Messianic Jews—Israelite by birth now following Jesus—as His special prey.

Not just Jewish followers of Christ, but *everyone* on earth during this horrific period would do well to recall that old hymn penned by Martin Luther in 1529.

*A mighty fortress is our God,
a bulwark never failing;
our helper he, amid the flood
of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
does seek to work us woe;
his craft and power are great,
and armed with cruel hate,
on earth is not his equal.*

*And though this world, with devils filled,
should threaten to undo us,
we will not fear, for God has willed
his truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim,
we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure,
for lo! his doom is sure;
one little word shall fell him.*

The last verse closes with,

*Let goods and kindred go,
this mortal life also;
the body they may kill:
God's truth abideth still;
his kingdom is forever!
(Martin Luther, 1529)*

Let this be *our* battle cry as well, when Satan comes on his prowl for us.