



THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

LESSON 8 – The Seventh Trumpet, the Woman, the Dragon, and the Man Child

LESSON OBJECTIVE

The goal of this lesson is to understand the interpretation of chapters 11:15-19 and 12 of the Revelation, with particular emphasis on the identification of the woman and the dragon.

NOTES ON REVELATION 11:15-19

11:15 “And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”

Having just finished the “parenthesis” between the sixth and seventh trumpets, the seventh and final trumpet now sounds. We learned earlier in chapter 11 that with the blowing of the seventh trumpet, God’s mystery (the overthrow of the nations and the establishment of Jesus’ eternal kingdom) will be quickly consummated, and that is what is about to unfold. At the blowing of the seventh trumpet, great voices speak, but the great voices are not identified; they may be the seven thunders from Revelation 10:3-4. They confirm what the mighty angel told John earlier about the consummation of God’s mystery, that the worldly kingdoms are overtaken by God the Father and God the Son, and that God the Son shall reign forever. This again confirms our identification in chapter 5 of the scroll that God the Son received from God the Father as the title deed to creation.

11:16 “And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,”

The completion of God’s mystery is the blessed hope of the saints, and thus we see the twenty-four elders (identified in the chapter 4 notes as likely being saints in leadership positions) fall on their faces and worship God. They recognize that all of the blessings they enjoy are sourced in God.

11:17 “Saying, We give thee thanks, O LORD God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.”

The twenty-four elders speak with a united voice of praise to God. They praise God specifically because he is the eternal, ever-existing God (recall Revelation 4:10 where the elders did the same thing). Moreover, they praise God for what has unfolded in the Revelation, His subjection of all of creation to Himself to rule over.

11:18 “And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.”

The “nations” refers to Gentile powers who, under the influence and control of Satan, oppose God and His people. Because of their disobedience, God’s wrath has come upon them (the seven seals we have been studying). The “time of the dead” approaches, that is, the time when the unsaved of all time are resurrected unto judgment, but for God’s

people, the resurrection is unto rewards and eternally reigning with God. We will spend more time discussing the resurrections in Revelation 20, but I would briefly suggest here that the saints being resurrected here are the Old Testament saints and the Tribulation Martyrs. The “Church Age” saints were already resurrected in the Rapture that occurred prior to the seven year Tribulation that is the subject of this book.

11:19 “And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.”

We have seen references to the heavenly Temple earlier in the book (the altar in Revelation 6:9, 8:3, 8:5, 9:13, and 11:1; and the Temple in 11:1). Now, the Temple is opened and John sees the ark of the covenant. Recall that the ark of the covenant was constructed as part of the tabernacle, and later was part of the Temple. It sat in the Holy of Holies, God’s presence manifested above it, and once a year (the Day of Atonement) the High Priest made a sacrifice there for the sins of the nation Israel for the year; Jesus, our perfect High Priest, made the sacrifice once for all in the heavenly tabernacle. (Exodus 25:10-22; Hebrews 9:1-14) The point here seems be that God is manifesting himself in judgment (“lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail,” all things we have seen earlier in this book), and we are to relate that judgment to the overall purpose of the events recorded so far in the book (to establish Jesus’ eternal kingdom), which purpose flows from Jesus’ sacrifice at the mercy seat.

NOTES ON REVELATION 12

12:1 “And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:”

Chapter 12 is a parenthesis like we had between the sixth and seventh seals (Chapter 7) and the sixth and seventh trumpets (Chapter 10:1-11:14). The difference is that in those two parentheses, God showed events that were contemporaneous with the breaking of the seals, whereas in Chapter 12, the parenthesis broadly covers the span of human history. John sees a woman clothed with the sun, which suggests she radiates in light. That the moon is under her feet suggests a certain amount of dominion. But the question remains, who is she? The crown on her head helps identify her as Israel, for the twelve stars represent the twelve tribes of Israel. This is the nation of Israel through God’s eyes, a glorious woman of strength, dignity, and dominion, which is all contrary to how the world typically views Israel. But let me suggest here, and defend as we move through the chapter, that this is a chapter of symbols with double referents. We will see that this woman, as a symbol, is fulfilled in part by Mary and in full by Israel.

12:2 “And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.”

We will see that the “child” is Jesus (and more). While in one sense we can say that Israel gave birth to Messiah, we can also say that Mary gave birth to Jesus. Both are in view here, though the image only partly indicates Mary. Although Mary was highly favored of God, she was not clothed with the sun nor did she exercise any dominion, but she was with child and gave birth to Jesus. While the travail and pain were literal for Mary, they refer to the chaotic political climate that Israel found itself under Roman rule when Jesus was born.

12:3 “And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.”

The great red dragon is Satan; there can be no dispute on this since he is specifically identified in verse 9 later in the chapter. Notice that John sees the red dragon in heaven. Satan was an angel, indeed a cherubim, like the four angels that surround God’s throne. (Ezekiel 28) He had a place in heaven, but lost it because of pride. Satan’s permanent exile from heaven occurs during the Tribulation (see verse 8). Satan is seen as a dragon with seven heads. He is red, a color that suggests blood and violence. The fact that he has seven heads, in the context of this book, indicates that whatever Satan has accomplished was permitted by God. Remember, “seven” is the mark in this book of God’s sovereignty and power, and even in the case of Satan, God exercises absolute power. Satan can only do that which God allows him to do. Each head has a crown and one of the heads has ten horns. The seven heads represent the seven largest Gentile powers that have dominated Israel throughout history, which in chronological order are: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome and the new Rome. We can deduce this from Daniel 7 (Daniel 2 is also helpful); in addition, we will find more support for this position from Chapters 13 and especially 17, though we will save those details future lessons. At the time Daniel wrote, the Egyptian and Assyrian Empires had rose to power and fell, and so Daniel does not mention them and only focuses on the existing power (Babylon) and those that would follow. It is helpful to note that the fourth beast in Daniel 7 has ten horns, which parallels the ten horns on the dragon. Also, in the parallel vision of Daniel 2, the fourth beast (the legs of the statue) has two phases (two legs). The first phase was the Roman Empire that controlled Israel during Jesus’ earthly ministry, and the second phase is yet to come, a revitalized or new Roman Empire. Whether or not it will go by that name is irrelevant, for it will be like the first one in substance. The great red dragon then has two referents, both to Satan and to those Gentile powers throughout history that he influenced and controlled against God and His people Israel. I would also note, briefly, that we will see in Chapter 13 the “beast,” which will look much like the dragon, also having seven heads and ten horns. The beast will have double referents as well, both to the Anti-Christ, and the same Gentile powers through the centuries that were controlled and influenced by Satan and were ruled by many anti-Christ. In Chapter 17, we will see that the beast is ridden (controlled) by the “scarlet harlot.” We will not go into the details of her identification at this point, other than to say that she is apostate religion in control of civil governments. Accordingly, we should recognize here that one of the dragon’s chief instruments of warfare is the scarlet harlot, false or apostate religion.

12:4 “And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.”

The dragon’s (Satan’s) tail is seen taking away a third of the stars, meaning that Satan led away one-third of the angels of heaven. Choosing to serve Satan rather than God, they are usually referred to as demons and they live in constant rebellion to God. They are cast to the earth where they do havoc (consider the many demon possessions we read about in the gospels). The primary goal of Satan, his demons, and the Gentile powers they influence and control is to destroy Jesus. Because Satan never knew when Jesus would be born, we see throughout the Bible his constant attacks on Israel, the nation from which Jesus would come; we see Satan’s attacks from when Cain slew Abel to Herod’s slaying of the babies in Bethlehem to the persecution of the Church in the New Testament to the persecution of Christians through history to the present time. Here again the double referents is evident. In one sense, as already indicated, throughout history Satan stood ready

through Gentile powers to devour the Messiah on his birth, and in another sense, it is Herod's attempt to murder Jesus that is in view.

12:5 "And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne."

Israel (and Mary) brought forth the man child, Jesus, who was to rule from David's throne (recall the words of Gabriel to Mary in Luke 1:31-33). As with the woman and the dragon, the man child also has two referents. Just as the woman points to the group of God's people, Israel, and a specific individual, Mary, the "man child" points to a specific individual, Jesus, and a specific group, the Church Jesus built. Jesus ascended (was "taken up") to heaven after his resurrection. (Acts 1:9) But the term used here is different; "caught up" is used in the New Testament for the rapture, a term that is nowhere else used to refer to Jesus' ascension. The reason it is used here is because of the double referents. Jesus ascended, but His Church was "caught up" or raptured unto God and his throne (recall the 24 elders before the throne).

12:6 "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days."

This vision is covering a great deal of time quickly. The previous verse covered the birth of Jesus and skipped over to the rapture of His Church. This verse skips ahead to the middle of the Tribulation when Anti-Christ breaks the covenant with Israel and overruns the city and kills God's two witnesses (Chapter 11). Recall from Matthew 24:15-16 that Jesus told the Jews, when the Anti-Christ desolates the Temple, to run to the wilderness. It is that event that is in view here. God is saying here that He has prepared a place to keep Israel safe when, during the Tribulation, they run to the wilderness. (Isaiah 63) Israel will be protected in the wilderness for 1,260 days, or three and a half years. This is the latter half of the seven-year Tribulation (or Daniel's 70th week); it is from the mid-point when Anti-Christ and his forces overrun Jerusalem through Jesus' return at the end of the seven years.

12:7 "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,"

This spiritual warfare in heaven is occurring throughout the Tribulation, and at a point in the latter half of the Tribulation (recall the fifth trumpet in Chapter 9) Satan is ejected from heaven, along with his angels, i.e., demons. Michael is the archangel (Jude 9) who fights for Israel. (Daniel 12:1-2)

12:8 "And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven."

Satan loses the battle (no surprise) and he and his demons are cast out of heaven permanently.

12:9 "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

This is the only place in the bible that squarely identifies Satan as the serpent from Genesis 3. Satan is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). His business is deceit.

12:10 “And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.”

We are not told whose voice this is, but the voice indicates that God’s kingdom and Christ’ rule are being put in place as Satan has been ejected from heaven. Notice that here Satan is called the “accuser,” which confirms our identification in Revelation 9:11 of Abaddon / Apollyon as Satan; recall that those Hebrew and Greek words meant “accuser.” Satan has always been about the business of accusing the saints (e.g., Job 1:6-11; Zechariah 3:1-4). That ends here.

12:11 “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”

It is those who were accused (i.e., Christians) that have overcome by the blood of the Lamb (salvation) and their testimony for God (works of faith). These are the Tribulation Martyrs in view again. Because they cannot be accused, Satan works through people to rise in hatred against them and murder them.

12:12 “Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.”

The call goes out for rejoicing in heaven because of the victory over Satan, by Michael and the Tribulation Martyrs. And the call goes out for woe to the unsaved on the earth and sea. Here, the earth and sea represent Israel and the Gentile nations; the unsaved inhabitants of the world will reap woe or judgment. Satan is coming to them and because he knows he has little time left, he will devote his remaining time to tormenting the unsaved.

12:13 “And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man *child*.”

In revenge, Satan will persecute the nation Israel. This means that he will control and influence men and nations to rise in anti-Semitism against Israel. Satan hates Israel because Jesus Christ came from Israel and conquered Satan.

12:14 “And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.”

When Israel (the woman) takes flight after the midpoint in the Tribulation, God gives her eagle’s wings, meaning that He enables the people to safely make it into the wilderness and escape Anti-Christ. The woman will remain in safety in the wilderness for a “time, and times, and half of time,” or three and a half years. Again, this is the second half of the Tribulation that is in view.

12:15 “And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.”

Satan is seen as shooting water from his mouth at Israel. The idea of water and a flood is a picture of persecution, not just a little persecution, but a flood of it. He tries to kill the woman.

12:16 “And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.”

God opens the earth up and diverts the flood waters. I believe this is a figurative picture of real events, meaning that Satan will probably not literally try to destroy the woman Israel with a flood of water, but he will strike at her with a flood of attacks, but God will personally deflect those attacks and protect the woman throughout the three and a half years.

12:17 “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Satan is angry at the woman and chases after the remnant of Israel as they flee to the wilderness. These are not just Jewish people, but Jewish Christians, which speaks to the success of both the 144,000 and the two witnesses, who we have previously identified as evangelists. Satan will primarily make war with them, as we have already seen, through the actions of Anti-Christ. (Daniel 7:21-25)

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record*, Tyndale House Publishers (1983)

RECOMMENDATION

It is highly recommended that each person taking this course read chapters 11 and 12 for this lesson and chapters 13 and 14 for next week in Henry M. Morris' commentary.