

Satan Persecutes Believers

Last Things

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This lesson is taken from Revelation chapter 12 and beginning at verse 13. Revelation chapter 12 beginning at verse 13 and that's on page 1,926.

13 When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. 14 The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach. 15 Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. 16 But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. 17 Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

The word of the Lord. [“Thanks be to God.”]

May we pray.

Help me, Lord, to be clear and concise as I always pray, but help me, Lord, to be compelling and practical, anoint me with your Holy Spirit, for it's only as you anoint a preacher with the Holy Spirit that he can take the truths of Holy Scripture and grind them in the mortar and pestle of the trials of life and give forth your word as it is preached that changes hearts and encourages your people. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Now we want to consider this passage of Scripture again. We looked at the first part of it, last Lord's Day, and we're skipping over part of it. I've preached out of this passage before. It's always been a favorite passage for Christmas because the very first time I did it five Christmases ago here, I talked about "How the Dragon Almost Stole Christmas."

But what's here is something that, reflecting on the very nature of this last book of the Bible, which as a magnificent symphony, takes all of these themes out of the Old Testament and weaves them together into a beautiful symphony of the triumph of God over all his and our enemies and that, we have here.

Now if you think about a few things here, you're struck first of all, "the time, times, and half a time"—that's taken from the book of Daniel. I'm not going to re-preach the book of Daniel because I did preach on that section back less than a year ago, and we understand—and you'll have to check this out. I'll send the link to the previous sermon, that the book of Daniel, the 70 weeks of Daniel, that the last week of the book of Daniel is not future for us.

What does it mean for the Messiah to be cut off (כרת) after Daniel's 69th "week" (Daniel 9:26)?

This takes us back to Genesis 15:18 when God cut (כרת) a covenant (בְּרִית) with Abram, where the LORD himself passes between the slaughtered animals, calling down a curse on himself if the covenant is not confirmed (Genesis 15:17).

It also points to how the covenant was sealed with an external token, circumcision: "It shall be the sign of the covenant (בְּרִית) between me and you" (Genesis 17:11) .

However, when someone refused to submit to circumcision, "That person shall be cut off (כרת) from his people; he has broken my covenant (בְּרִית)" (Genesis 17:14).

The Lord Jesus' ultimate baptism did not take place in A.D. 26, when he was baptized by John in the Jordan River; it was in A.D. 30 when the wrath of God was poured out on him on the cross, and he was immersed under divine judgment (Matthew 20:22). His baptism is our baptism (Romans 6:2-11).

Jesus true circumcision did not take place when was eight days old, but when he was cut off in covenant judgment on the cross. Because all the fullness of Deity dwells bodily in the Lord Jesus Christ, his circumcision is our circumcision, and his baptism is our baptism (Colossians 2:9-12)

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In light of Daniel 9:24, I interpret the remaining verses to center in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is why I understand the Lord Jesus to be the subject of Daniel 9:27, "He (the Messiah) shall confirm the covenant with many" (וְהִגְבִּיר בְּרִית לְרַבִּים), καὶ δυναστεύσει ἡ διαθήκη εἰς πολλούς).

Therefore, I interpret the "many" as referring to the Jewish remnant, in keeping with Isaiah 53:11-12, fulfilled on the cross (Matthew 20:28), and anticipated in the cup of the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:27-28; Mark 14:23-24; Luke 22:20).

The Lord Jesus made strong God's covenant with Abraham by suffering the curse of that covenant (Genesis 15:18), because God had called down damnation on his own head if the promise to Abram failed (Genesis 15:8-17 with Jeremiah 34:18-20).

The whole context of the Lord's Supper is the eternal covenant, initially inaugurated with Abraham, confirmed in the cross, and sealed in the cup (Luke 22:29).

In light of Matthew 24:15-16, Mark 13:14, and Luke 21:20, we must understand the last part of Daniel 9:26-27 as pointing to the Roman prince Titus who accomplished this in A.D. 70, within the lifetime of those who witnessed the Messiah's being cut off by his crucifixion.

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Half of it is past for us because Christ is crucified in the middle of Daniel's 70th week, and then what follows is three and a half years, that is, if a week is like a week of years.

So what's left in the book of Daniel that was future for all believers from the time of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, is a period of three and a half years, or 1,260 days, or 42 months, or time, times, and half a time. It's the same period of time. And so, again, I won't re-preach Daniel's 70th week, but I'll send the links. But what you do have here is that this period of time from the crucifixion of Christ, midpoint in Daniel's 70th week until the end of time is this period of time, times, and half a time.

The next thing that we want to see here is this: who is the woman?

Well, last Lord's Day we concluded that the woman is Israel (Genesis 37:9-11, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?sid=123231832116839>), and we concluded that the woman is Eve, and we concluded that the woman is Mary, and so what you have here, as this woman flees, notice that the woman is not identical to verse 17, Revelation 12:17.

Then the dragon was enraged at the woman (you see, because she's rescued), and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring, those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony. (Revelation 12:17)

Who are those people? Now here's my theory and theories need to be held loosely. My theory is that the woman in view at this point are Jewish believers in the first century and it parallels strikingly what we read in the Olivet Discourse, which is Matthew 24 and 25, Mark 13, and Luke 21.

It's very parallel, and what we do know is that Jesus had warned his disciples before he was crucified that when they saw the armies surrounding the city, and that Luke 21 makes it very plain that he's talking about foreign armies surrounding Jerusalem, then they are to flee and get out of the city, not go back down and get something out of their house, jump from roof to roof, get out. If you're outside the city, stay outside the city, because terrible things will happen. Now if you read Luke 21:, the army surrounding Jerusalem, that's parallel with Matthew 24 and Mark 13, with the abomination of desolation.

The Lord Jesus' first sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, began with his sitting on a mountain (Matthew 5:1), so did his last sermon (Matthew 24:3).

What prompted this sermon was his disciples' threefold question: "When will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3)

For them, the end of the Temple would be the end of the world as they knew it.

While God cannot be contained in an earthly house, the Tabernacle/Temple was a kind of embassy of heaven.

"Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You; how much less this house which I have built!" (1 Kings 8:27)

"Night and day may you watch over this temple, the place where you promised you would live. May you answer your servant's prayer for this place." (1 Kings 8:29)

Over this very Mount of Olives, the glory of the Lord had passed when he abandoned Solomon's Temple (Ezekiel 10:18-19; 11:22-23).

It was not unlike the time the Philistines had captured God's throne, the Ark of the Covenant (1 Samuel 4:21), and the glory had departed from the Tabernacle, Ichabod.

Matthew 24:3-8 describes events that have happened throughout history, and Matthew 24:9-14 foretells the suffering believers will suffer before the end.

The end in view is the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans at the climax of the Jewish war against Rome in A.D. 66-70.

When one compares Matthew 24:15-28 with Luke 21:20-24, it becomes clear that Rome's armies are in view because believers could take action; whereas, the only action we can take with regard to his second coming is repentance and faith.

The Glory of the Lord is present with believers (Matthew 18:20).

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The Lord Jesus quotes from Isaiah 13:10 in Matthew 24:29.

This gives us insight into what he is speaking about. He is using apocalyptic language, pulling back the curtain to show us what is really going on.

Isaiah 13:6 speaks about “The Day of the Lord,” and as we read Isaiah 13:9-10, we get a picture of the end of the world, climaxing in Isaiah 13:13 with the violent shaking of the world. However, as we read further in the chapter, it is very clear that what is in view is the END OF THE WORLD FOR BABYLON. Isaiah 13:17-19 describes the fall of the great city to the Medes and Persians in 539 B.C.

When the Lord Jesus describes the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple with these words, what he is telling us is that A.D. 70 would not only mark the complete destruction of the Temple, it would begin the Jewish Dark Ages. Millions of Jews would die or be taken as slaves. It was the end of the world as they had known it.

When Israel returned from Babylonian Captivity, she set about to rebuild the destroyed Temple. When the foundation was laid, there was a great celebration, but there was also great lamentation on the part of those who remembered Solomon’s magnificent Temple (Ezra 3:10-13).

God’s glory had filled the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:34) and Solomon’s Temple (1 Kings 8:10-11), but there is no record of this happening with the Second Temple.

However, the Second Temple would be far grander than Solomon’s (Haggai 2:6-9), and the reason for this is that the Lord himself would come to this Temple (Malachi 3:1). Our Lord Jesus Christ himself walked there. He is the substance, and what a privilege is ours (Hebrews 13:10).

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As we read the Olivet Discourse, we see a change in Matthew 25:36. Up until that point, the Lord has been dealing with the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70.

Two things stand out:

The time of his return is unknown (Matthew 24:36-41, 42-44, 50; 25:5, 19).

There will be a delay (Matthew 24:48; 25:5, 19).

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In Matthew 25:31 Jesus is clearly speaking about his second coming. When he refers to himself as the Son of Man, he is taking us back to Daniel 7:13-14.

He divides people into two categories: the sheep and the goats. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who dies in place of his sheep (John 10:11), and his sheep include not only his current disciples, but also people who had not yet been born (John 10:16). Not everyone is one of Christ's sheep (John 10:26-30). The rest of humankind are the goats (Matthew 25:41-46). Hell was not prepared for humans, but for Satan and his angels, and the goats send themselves there (Matthew 25:41-46).

Unlike the goats who get what they deserve, the Lord's sheep do not get what they deserve. The salvation of the sheep is due solely to God's grace in Christ, and God's kingdom was prepared for them before the world began (Matthew 25:34).

We receive salvation by means of faith alone, but by a faith that is never alone, and the deeds described in the last part of the Olivet Discourse are the evidence of the New Birth. The sheep are doing what comes naturally—supernaturally. They are not attempting to earn salvation and are surprised by our Lord's words (Matthew 25:37-39).

The standard of Christian living involves much more than the Ten Commandments; the standard is the life of Christ himself, who lived out the Ten Commandments in a life of risk, submission, and self-sacrifice (Philippians 2:5-8).

We are called to serve Christ's sheep, his sisters and brothers, and we must be guided by Galatians 6:9-10.

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What is the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet? Well, it had a fulfillment initially in the time shortly after Daniel. Right now, the Jewish people are celebrating Chanukah and Chanukah celebrates the deliverance of the Jewish people against the Greeks. The Greeks were the cruelest of all the people who ever dealt with the Jewish people, and they forced the Jews to become Greeks. That was the goal.

Alexander the Great's vision was that every nation, tongue, and tribe would become Greek. They would speak a common language, Greek. They would have a common culture, and we can think of all of the plays from Euripides

and Sophocles to Aristophanes to the philosophers Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle, the goal of Alexander the Great was to convert the world to Greek ways. And when the Jews would not do that, he concocted the most vicious, not he himself, but Alexander, struck down in the prime of life, the four Generals who succeed him, that is, Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy (<https://www.rbvincent.com/josephusabridged.htm>).

Their descendants did terrible things to the Jewish people, things like when a woman circumcised her child, they killed the child and hung it around her neck, or frying people in giant frying pans. I mean, the butchery and torture of the Greeks towards the Jewish people, both out of the South, the Ptolemies out of Egypt, and the Seleucids out of Antioch in Syria, are unbelievable, and if you look at an original King James Version, it has the Apocrypha, you read 1 and 2 Maccabees, they describe these tortures. And so anyhow, under all of that, there's a great deliverance. The Jews celebrate that great deliverance at Chanukah (<https://www.rbvincent.com/maccabees.htm>).

What happens is that the temple had been defiled by this successor of Alexander the Great, a man named Antiochus Epiphanes. Epiphanes means manifestation. And Antiochus believed he was a manifestation of the gods. And so he went to Jerusalem. He slaughtered a hog on the holy altar of God in Jerusalem at the temple and profaned the temple by slaughtering a pig in honor of the Olympian god Zeus. And so furious persecution arose, and the Jews resisted and then God raised up his hammer. and that was the Hasmoneans who were the descendants of a Jewish priest. The word Maccabee refers to a hammer. So God's hammer was the Hasmonean family that led the Jews in revolt and they defeated Antiochus Epiphanes and they went to the temple to rededicate it to the Lord and in Jewish tradition and legend, they had only one day's supply of sacred oil and they had to consecrate others but that one day's supply of oil to light the candelabra in the Holy of Holies or outside the Holy of Holies in the Holy Place, lasted seven days. That's the tradition of Chanukah, which Jewish people are celebrating right now (<https://www.rbvincent.com/hanukkah.htm>).

And so the abomination of desolation has its initial fulfillment in the time of Antiochus Epiphanies, but it also—because prophecy recapitulates—has a fulfillment in the time of the Romans when they destroyed the city of Jerusalem and destroyed the temple so that not one stone of the temple was

left standing on another. The only thing that was left were the foundation stones that were there to reinforce it.

So in 70 AD, the Roman armies, and remember that the symbol of the Romans that they carried was a buzzard, an eagle; the words are indistinguishable in Greek (ἀετός, Matthew 24:28; Luke 17:37 “Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather”; “Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.”). And so when you see the abomination of desolation and he talks about where the vulture is, where the corpse is, there the vultures will be gathered, so the Roman symbol, the eagle, a carrion bird, and in that case a buzzard, and so Jesus is saying all that there.

Now, so what happened to the Jewish Christians? They remembered what Jesus had told them in the Olivet Discourse, and they got out, because what happened amazingly is that Jerusalem was surrounded by Roman armies under the Syrian legate, that is the emissary of the Roman emperor, and for some reason, mysteriously, Cestius Gallus, who was that Roman General, retreated. He didn't realize the city was ready to cave in, but he retreated, and what that did was to allow the Jewish believers in Jesus to escape and they escaped into the wilderness (<https://www.rbvincent.com/BibleStudies/matt24.htm>).

They had a place prepared for them. They survived when the city of Jerusalem was destroyed because they remembered what Jesus said.

And so my theory here in Revelation chapter 12 and look there at verse 15:

Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river to overtake the woman and sweep her away with a torrent. But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. Then the serpent was enraged at the woman (that is Jewish believers), and then went off to make war against the rest of her offspring who obey God's commandments and hold the testimony of Jesus. (Revelation 12:15-17)

So I believe that this has a fulfillment, notice I said “a fulfillment” in the first century of the Christian era. By the way, CE means Christian era and

BCE means before the Christian era. Don't let anybody tell you it means something different.

So in the first century of the Christian era, this prophecy in the book of Revelation has an initial fulfillment, and that is the protection of the Jewish believers and also of the Gentile believers later on, but that's not the end of the story as we know that prophecy recapitulates. We will see these things in the future. and we see them in a certain sense throughout history.

Now let's look, if we can think of Pachelbel's Canon for a moment, let's look at some Old Testament themes that are clearly here.

First of all, the woman is delivered. In verse 14, "The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert." Wings of a great eagle. Turn with me, if you would, to Deuteronomy chapter 32. Deuteronomy chapter 32 and this is a song of Moses that foretells the future of the Jewish people, and right there in the middle of it, he tells us something about how God dealt with his people, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Look at verse 10. That's page 323, Deuteronomy 32, verse 10.

In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste.
He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple
of his eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its
young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on
its pinions. The LORD alone led him; no foreign god was with
him. (Deuteronomy 32:10-12)

Now, I think this is one of many times that God speaks of bearing us up on eagle's wings, and that's what he did for the Jewish people in the wilderness (Exodus 19:4).

Go back for a moment to the previous page, 323, and if you look at verse 8, he says this, "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel."

And I need to make a comment. If you look down at the bottom, it says that's the Masoretic text, but the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Greek Septuagint say something else. Do you know what the Dead Sea Scrolls say there? God

divided up the nations according to the *B'nai Elohim*, that's a Hebrew phrase, the sons of God. The Septuagint replaces "the sons of Israel" (בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) with "the angels of God" (ἀγγέλων θεοῦ). This has found support in the Dead Sea Scrolls (the reading could be either בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים or אֱלֹהֵי בְּנֵי).

The B'nai Elohim. And that's exactly how the Greek Septuagint understands it. Who are the B'nai Elohim? That is the angels under God's administration and what it's saying in the original Scriptures, because the Dead Sea Scrolls are a far more ancient Hebrew text than that of our Hebrew Bibles, because the oldest Hebrew manuscript that we have, which is *Codex Leningradensis*, is about from around 1000 in the Christian era, and so the Septuagint reflects an older Hebrew text, and the original Hebrew text is encapsulated in the Dead Sea Scrolls. God divided up the nations according to these ruling angels, principalities and powers, he says.

Gerhard von Rod comments: "He subordinated one nation to each of the heavenly beings who had to take care of it like a guardian angel" (Gerhard von Rad (1962) *Old Testament Theology*. (New York: Harper and Brothers), p. 196).

Von Rod's comments are supported by the Apocryphal book of Sirach: "He appointed a ruler for every nation, but Israel is the Lord's own portion" (ἐκάστῳ ἔθνει κατέστησεν ἡγούμενον, καὶ μερὶς κυρίου Ἰσραηλ ἐστίν, Sir 17:17, Revised Standard Version).

Now notice, because this is very interesting, so he set the boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the B'nai Elohim, the sons of God, the angels. "For the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance" (Deuteronomy 32:9). Now that's an interesting thing. You see, God allowed these mighty angel spirits, these ruling principalities and powers, to administer the things in Moab, in Babylon and Assyria, in Egypt, they're under these powerful, powerful archangels, but what God says here, which is very striking, is he chose the Jewish people as his inheritance.

In other words, he let these other godlings—remember there's only one true God—but we have these supernatural beings that rule over the affairs of men and nations, and they are supernatural, they are real, but they're not gods. But what God's saying is that Israel is his unique possession of all the nations of the earth. Think of Amos 3:2, "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth; therefore I'm going to punish you for your sins."

Think about that. Do you ever feel like God's chastening you? It's because he loves you.

Whom the Lord loves, he chastens and scourges every son whom he receives. If you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then you're illegitimate children and not real sons. (Hebrews 12:6-8)

So in other words, God chose the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as his unique treasure on earth and sent his Son to redeem them.

So there's the eagle's wings.

Now there's something else here. I want you to look over to Psalm 124 and look at what we have here. This is a song of David, and it's also called a Song of Ascents. What is a Song of Ascent? It's a song that would have been recited as people would make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. So that's what it is. Now look at what he says.

If the LORD" (that is God's proper name, Yahweh), If the LORD had not been on our side—let Israel say—if the LORD had not been on our side when men attacked us, when their anger flared against us, they would have swallowed us alive. (Psalm 124:1-3)

Look at the next clause there, verse 4, page 967, "The flood would have engulfed us, the torrent would have swept over us, the raging waters would have swept us away."

Do you see that? You see how "Pachelbel's Canon," again, a musical theme prophetically by David in Psalm 124, is picked up on in the book of Revelation.

And what you see here is what goes on in the world today. It went on in David's day. It went on in the first century. It goes on today. And that is that at times it seems as if we are being literally overwhelmed and swept away by the troubles of life. You ever felt that way? "Lord, I'm drowning! Lord, I'm drowning! Will you release me, Lord? Will you help me? My head's going under the water!"

I remember the foolish—one of many foolish things I did—one time back when I rode my motorcycle, back when I had a motorcycle, I decided to go canoeing on my lake, which is at the end of our hill. And so I took my canoe, I got in, the dogs wanted to join me. It was bitter cold winter. And anyhow, I decided to try a technique that enables you to have to row only on one side of a canoe, and what do you do?

You try to let it tilt up, and you just use your body to maneuver the canoe either to the right or the left while you paddle on one side. Well, it was a windy, bitter, cold day and right around the point on the other side of where our house is, the wind caught the canoe and flipped it over. Oh, by the way, the dogs did bark, did want to get out, because the dogs are smarter than people sometimes.

And so, there I am, the canoe flips, I go under the icy water of our lake in January, and when my head came out of the water, the first words out of my mouth were, “Help me Jesus!”

And you know what happened? He helped me. He put a thought in my mind, “Grab onto that canoe.” And I did. I grabbed onto that canoe. I used it for buoyancy and I kicked with my feet until I finally got solid earth underneath me, and then I went up on the shore, emptied out the water, got back in because the fastest way back to my home was in that canoe, and I canoed back to my house where even ice cold water out of the shower was burning hot because I was so cold.

What am I saying? You know, life’s like that, isn’t it?

If you read the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus ends with a description of two houses, a house that’s built on the rock, a house that’s built on the sand (Matthew 7:24-27). And what happens? The same things happen to both houses. The rains come down, the floods rise up, and they’re going to overwhelm, they’re going to knock that house down. But the house that’s built on the rock stands.

Brothers and sisters, we’re people whose house is built on the rock, the Lord Jesus Christ. People in the world, their houses are built on sand. When the floods come, when the rains come down, when they’re pummeled, when

they're overwhelming, when they're crying out, "Oh God, help me, help me, help me!" God helps. God helps his own. And God does miracles.

If we think of another theme out of the Old Testament, the theme of the exodus. In the exodus it's as if a chaos dragon called Tiamat, Rahab (רַהַב). 'a mythical monster, the name of which means "surger", and plays upon the restlessness and crashing of the sea (so Fohrer Das Buch Jesaja 2:93f); Is 51:9 Ps 89:11 Jb 9:13 (עֲזָרֵי רַהַב, cf. Bab. rēšūšu, rēšūša the helpers of Kingu and Tiamat, Enuma Eliš 4:69, 107; AHw. 972a), Jb 26:12 Sir 43:25' (Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner (1958). The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (Leiden: E. J. Brill), p. 1193).

It's as if a chaos dragon is going to destroy Israel when she's escaped from Egypt and Pharaoh, and there she is in front of the Sea of Reeds, Yom Suph, or the Red Sea, and where are they going to go? Pharaoh's army is coming. The chariots are racing. The noise is terrible, and there before them is no escape. The water's there.

"Are we going to be deluged? Are we going to be destroyed? Lord, what are we going to do?" And God intervenes. He rescues them. And again, it's this theme, isn't it? The torrent, the water, the waters of chaos, the waters of trouble, God splits apart.

Just as the Psalms reiterate some of the pagan mythology about people like Rahab. By the way, she is the prostitute of Jericho, but Rahab—she was named for a monster called Rahab. And what does God do with Rahab? He slits her in half. He slaughters Rahab.

The Lord God defeats these monsters of chaos and destruction because Israel was going to be swallowed up alive in the exodus. But what does God do? He not only splits that horrible sea monster apart, but in splitting her apart, the land is dry, and God intervenes by taking his manifest presence, the pillar of fire and smoke, and he shifts from leading Israel to going behind them to prevent Pharaoh from attacking all night long, and he's giving light to the Israelites, and he's giving darkness to the Egyptians. And so what happens is, when the last Israelite has crossed over on dry land, then God lifts that cloud out of the way, the armies of Pharaoh look and say, "Hey, they did it, we can do it." And as soon as they get down there, their chariot wheels begin to bog down and then suddenly God releases the waters and

they are immersed. You and I are not immersed. You and I escape (Exodus 14:10-31).

And so in Psalm 124, we see this terrible thing where we would have been swallowed up alive:

When their anger flared against us, they would have swallowed us up alive; the flood would have engulfed us, the torrent would have swept over us, the raging waters would have swept us away. Praise be to the LORD, who has not let us be torn by their teeth. We have escaped like a bird out of the fowler's snare; the snare has been broken, and we have escaped. Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. (Psalm 124:3-8)

Turn with me briefly back to Revelation chapter 12, and so what we see here in Revelation 12 is something that is based on things that happened in the past, partial fulfillments, and there on page 1,926, the dragon, this creature who was in the garden of Eden, is enraged.

The woman escapes, verse 14, on two wings of an eagle for that season. Verse 15, then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river to overtake the woman and sweep her away with a torrent. But verse 16, the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river the dragon that spewed out.

Think of that again in the exodus. In the parting of the Red Sea, Yom Suph, in the parting of the Red Sea, God is causing the earth to open up, as it were, after a manner of speaking, and provide the way of deliverance, for the water's not touching his own people. And by the way, the Scripture says in 1 Corinthians chapter 10:1-2 that all those people who left Egypt, those who were loyal to the Lord God, they were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. How were they baptized by Moses in the cloud and the sea? Who was immersed? The Egyptians were immersed, but God's people were sprinkled with a mist of water.

Now, I realize you say, "Well, that's stretching."

I'm not trying to argue about modes of baptism; that's a silly argument about things in many ways. The mode of baptism is utterly unimportant in the New

Testament. I want to say that again, as God is my witness. If it were important, God would have done what he had done in the book of Leviticus. There's no New Testament book of Leviticus.

You can make a case for sprinkling in the New Testament documents. You can make a case for pouring in the New Testament documents. And you can make a case for immersion in the New Testament documents.

The important thing is not how you're baptized, but that you're baptized. And why? because baptism is an outward sign of an inward work of grace. But the important thing that we end with is this: What had an initial fulfillment in the first century is still going on in our world today.

When you feel absolutely overwhelmed with the floods of life, and it seems that it's only natural, I mean, hey, ask yourself this question, isn't that the picture in view that it's all natural here, and yet it's also supernatural?

When you're overwhelmed, when you're drowning, say, "Lord, I'm drowning, help me!" Just like the old, crazy Bob in the frozen lake. No, not frozen, but it was freezing, coming up out of the water and saying, "Lord, Jesus, help me!" He did.

And this I want to say to you, no matter who you are, no matter what's going on in your life, no matter what troubles you face, today, today on the 10th day of December in the year of our Lord 2023, no matter what you're going through, no matter what's going on in your life, I swear to you before Almighty God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Lord will rescue you. He will take care of you. You will not be destroyed. When cruel men arise against you in the form of floods of trouble, God is in control.

Dear ones, I say this, why are my wife and I happy people?

We are overwhelmingly happy people. I want to tell you why. Why are we happy? We experience the same troubles as everybody else. The troubles of life, whether they're medical or relational or financial or this or that, we face those same trials, but we rest on one fundamental truth: "All things—not some things—all things work together for good to those who love God.

All things are not good. There's a lot of bad stuff that happens. You're going to have bad things happen to you, but Dear Ones in Christ, there's nothing

that happens to you that Almighty God is not going to cause to work out for your good.

And what is the ultimate good, according to Romans 8:28 and 29? He wants to make you and me more like Jesus because the standard for the Christian life isn't even the Ten Commandments, it isn't even the two great commandments, love God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself. The ultimate standard of the Christian life is being like Jesus in this world, modeling the teachings of Jesus and his life.

How did Jesus live with others? He turned the other cheek. He said even the people didn't ask him for forgiveness. "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

All reconciliation in this life is superficial because nobody knows his own heart, but at the judgment seat of Christ, when everything is open, everybody will see their own role in everything. That's when they'll be full, real, radical, and complete reconciliation. But until then, in a world of superficial reconciliation and much trouble, be pregnant with hope, be pregnant with confidence that God is on your side, that he will cause the earth to swallow the satanic torrent that's poured out against you, and in the long run, you will be amazed at what God has done.

I'll tell you one last story, and for those particularly who are watching.

Many years ago, there was a burglar, and I've told this story before, by the name of Danny Singleton. And Danny was a very smart burglar. He had studied disarming burglar alarms and many other things when he was incarcerated in juvenile detention in Louisiana, and when he got out, he put to use the skills he learned in Louisiana's most excellent school for training criminals.

And so what he would do, he knew that during grazing season, now grazing season is from Thanksgiving, and if you're in Louisiana, through Mardi Gras. That's grazing season, and that's when people really put on the beef. Well anyhow, people do something else during grazing season. If they've got a \$13,000 mink coat, if they've got a \$50,000 diamond necklace, they normally keep it in a vault at the bank, but during grazing season, they pull those things out and have them in their home.

And so Danny would go on several different streets in Alexandria where the 1% live, and he would case those places, and what he would do—and this is before cell phones and answering machines—he would go back to his motel, he would see this couple leaving, and he would go back to his motel and call their telephone number, and then he would park his car on another street, have on jogging clothes with his burglar tools in his jogging clothes, and he would jog right up their driveway next to their house, and he would listen, and if the phone was ringing, he knew he was okay.

So taking those wonderful skills he learned in reform school and putting them to use, he disabled their burglar alarm, and he went in, and most people have their stuff upstairs, and so he would go on upstairs, and he would stay there totally content, not worried at all until he heard the phone no longer ringing, in which case he knew it was time to get out of Dodge. And so, he would steal lots of things, and the curious thing is that he actually was serving time in St. Landry Parish Jail, but two deputies would let him out and return for his returning to them these items that he was stealing, and I learned back then that you get 10% on the dollar.

And so anyhow, this is long story short, so, my closest friend there, who if he were alive today would be 96, was very close friends with a district attorney. And the district attorney told my friend Dick, he said, “Dick, why don’t you get your preacher to go up and see Danny Singleton.”

So I went in to see Danny, and it was the old Alexandria City Jail, and I went in, and I began to talk to him and I began to share the gospel with him. And I said, “Danny, I want to tell you a basic truth.”

“What’s that,” he said.

I said, “The moment you commit your life to Jesus Christ, the moment it’s in your best interest to get out of jail, that door will be open.”

And he used several Anglo-Saxon, onomatopoeic words to tell me he didn’t believe that. And so he said, “You can go on, leave.”

So I went to call the jailer, and the jailer had forgotten to lock the door, and so when it swung open, he said, “Come back in here.”

And we became friends, and I actually rode with him when he was being escorted to St. Landry Parish by two Alexandria police detectives in the front and they were nervous as cats, because once we crossed into St. Landry Parish, they were concerned that somebody was going to try to kill him. And we got there okay.

But what I'm saying is this: Whomever you are, watching, no matter what you're going through in life, you may be in prison, you may be facing total financial disaster, your marriage may be broken apart, you may be deeply concerned for children and grandchildren—no matter what's going on in your life, I can tell you this, as God is my witness, the moment that it is in your best interest for those things to cease, and you to walk in freedom again, that door will be open.

And in the meantime, if you're in jail, I can tell you this, look at it not as God punishing you anymore, but look at it as an opportunity. God has sent you into a very difficult mission field, so you can share your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ with other people who would never hear you if you were not sharing in their circumstances, just as Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail praised God in the middle of the night and he used that powerful testimony (Acts 16:25-34).

May we pray.

Lord, I pray that as we face the storms of life, as we face the floodwaters of the great red dragon who wants to sweep us away in the torrential stream, Lord, may we look up knowing that you will always take care of us, you will rescue us, you will bless us for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, amen.