

THE DRAGON RAGES

REVLATION 12:13-17

TEXT: *Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. ¹⁴ But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. ¹⁵ So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. ¹⁶ But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. ¹⁷ And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

Last week we looked at the Great Red Dragon in Revelation chapter 12 that was waiting to devour the child, born of the woman. We are told earlier in this chapter that this male child would rule all the nations of the world with a rod of iron. This child is obviously Christ and we read immediately after this text that the child was caught up to God and His throne. I want to spend a little time this week talking about what this means, what has resulted because of this, and how we as Christians should receive this word.

I said a moment ago that the male child was obviously Jesus Christ. Here at Church of the King we often sing Psalm 2. "Why do the heathen nations rage"? The Apostle John often references this Psalm in the book of Revelation. The male child who will rule with a rod of iron is in fact a direct reference from Psalm 2.

*Why do the nations rage,
And the people plot a vain thing?
² The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,
³ "Let us break Their bonds in pieces
And cast away Their cords from us."*

⁴ *He who sits in the heavens shall laugh;
The Lord shall hold them in derision.*
⁵ *Then He shall speak to them in His wrath,
And distress them in His deep displeasure:*
⁶ *“Yet I have set My King
On My holy hill of Zion.”*
⁷ *“I will declare the decree:
The LORD has said to Me,
‘You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.*
⁸ *Ask of Me, and I will give You
The nations for Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth for Your possession.*
⁹ *You shall break them with a rod of iron;
You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.”*

It is something that is often tough for us to catch but what John is doing in this passage is he jumps right from the birth of the man child to the time that He is caught up to the throne of God. What is important to see is that in Psalm 2 we see the exact same emphasis.

*“Yet I have set My King
On My holy hill of Zion.”*

⁷ *“I will declare the decree:
The LORD has said to Me,
‘You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.*
⁸ *Ask of Me, and I will give You
The nations for Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth for Your possession.*

All the nations of the earth are given to Christ. He is told to ask, and it will be given to Him. The Lord Jesus Christ, as King, rules from His holy hill of Zion and from there, the throne of God, He subdues the nations and He does so with this iron rod. Dashing the nations that refuse to kiss the Son, nations like pottery. But where is this Zion that Christ rules from?

We are told that the dragon attempts to devour the man-child, and that the man child is "caught up to God, and His throne."

This "catching up" is prophesied in the seventh chapter of Daniel. We talked about this passage a little bit last week when we spoke about the dream that Daniel had. I am not going to read the entire passage but I am going to briefly summarize this passage. I would advise Daniel Chapter 7 for your own personal study. It will likely raise some questions, but I want to point out just some of the highlights today.

In this dream, Daniel see's four strange creatures coming out of the sea. The beasts are like a lion, a bear, a leopard with four heads, and the fourth beast is an exceedingly powerful and terrible beast, who is described as having ten horns on his head. We are told in the interpretation of this dream that these beasts represent world kingdoms. These kingdoms are Babylon which is the lion, the Medo-Persian Empire is the bear, and Greece which is the four headed leopard, and the exceedingly powerful beast with the ten horns is Rome. I pointed out last week that we should notice that these beasts share a striking similarity to the dragon, in that the dragon is described as having 7 heads and 10 horns.

The text then tells us that the dominion and the authority of each of these beasts would be taken from them. Daniel then watched until thrones were put in to place, and the Ancient of Days is seated. The clothing of the Ancient of Days is described as being white as snow, and his hair was like pure wool. His throne is was a fiery flame and its wheels are a burning fire. The Ancient of Days is ministered to by a vast multitude, and the court is seated, and the books are opened.

After the books are opened we read:

*"I was watching in the night visions,
And behold, One like the Son of Man,
Coming with the clouds of heaven!
He came to the Ancient of Days,
And they brought Him near before Him.*

*Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom,
That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion,*

*Which shall not pass away,
And His kingdom the one
Which shall not be destroyed.*

This coming of the Son of Man is often misunderstood to be a reference to the rapture. However when we read the text:

*One like the Son of Man,
Coming with the clouds of heaven!
He came to the Ancient of Days,*

We see that the Son of Man is not coming to the earth but He is coming to His Father.

All the way back in Revelation 4 and 5 we discussed the ascension of our Lord, from the perspective of the throne room of God. Here we see that same event viewed in its historical scope. The dragon has attempted to slay the Christ, and instead Christ conquered death. And after that He is caught up to His Father.

This catching up or the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ is the final sign that Satan has been defeated. And what is important to notice is that Satan knows this. The last verse in last week's text says:

Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."

Our text this week begins with verse 13.

Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child.

The text could not be more clear. The dragon has been cast to the earth. His power and his authority have been dealt a mortal wound. The promise that was made all the way back in Genesis 3 has now began its ultimate fulfillment. The dragon has been cast down to the earth and defeated. He knows he cannot defeat the man-child and so he begins to pursue and persecute the woman.

The woman, as we have discussed represents the Israel of God. The man child is born from the woman, He is the promised seed of Genesis 3, but the woman who travailed to bring forth the Messiah, now must contend against the dragon. Remember the promise says in this order:

*He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.*

I think sometimes we forget that the bruising of the heel, continues, even after the serpent has been cast down. In fact, it can be argued that this bruising may even intensify after the dragons defeat. Yes he has been defeated, yes he has been cast down, but this causes the dragon to rage against the people of God.

Verse 14 continues:

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

This verse is another verse that refers back to the Old Testament. This time referring to Deuteronomy 32:9-12. The reference here is to the way in which God delivered ancient Israel from her Egyptian oppressors.

*For the LORD's portion is His people;
Jacob is the place of His inheritance.
¹⁰ "He found him in a desert land
And in the wasteland, a howling wilderness;
He encircled him, He instructed him,
He kept him as the apple of His eye.
¹¹ As an eagle stirs up its nest,
Hovers over its young,
Spreading out its wings, taking them up,
Carrying them on its wings,
¹² So the LORD alone led him,
And there was no foreign god with him.*

Just as the Lord God redeemed the Israel of old from Egypt by lifting them on eagles wings and bringing them through the wilderness to the land of promise. He now promises that the woman, who represents Israel, who is under severe persecution by the raging dragon is carried into the wilderness to her place and the purpose for this is that she would be nourished.

The passage tells us that she was taken into the wilderness for a specific amount of time. The time listed is a time and times and half a time. This is common prophetic language in the Bible for a period of three and a half years.

The time leading up to and including the destruction of the Jewish temple in A.D. 70 is a period of time that was three and a half years in length. This prophecy in Revelation 12 is speaking about this period of time. Jesus warned his disciples in Luke 21 with these words:

"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. ²¹ Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. ²² For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

One of the things that is strange about this warning is that if you know anything about siege warfare, you would ask, "how can you flee a city once it has been besieged?" A fair question. Once a city is laid siege too. It is incredibly difficult or impossible to escape.

Bible commentator Adam Clarke wrote regarding this siege. "It is very remarkable that not a single Christian perished in the destruction of Jerusalem, though there were many there when Cestius Gallus invested the city; and had he persevered in the siege he would soon have rendered himself master of it; but when he unexpectedly and unaccountably raised the siege, the Christians took that opportunity to escape."

The Christians fled to, of all places, the wilderness to a town named Pella. This is where they dwelt while the city of Jerusalem was destroyed. The flight to Pella took place, 3 and 1/2 years before the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. It was At that time, Titus laid siege to Jerusalem, his

battering rams destroyed the city walls, and ultimately he destroyed the city and the temple. The atrocities that went on within the city during this conquest are almost beyond imagination. The historian Josephus tells us that over one million were killed during the siege of Jerusalem. Some have said his numbers are exaggerated, but most historians believe that upwards of 600,000 lost their lives during this conquest.

We could spend more time speaking of this event, but the text is about not the destruction of the city, but God's saving of those who belong to Him. And we must also remember that while it is true, that this prophecy found its very literal fulfillment in the escape of the early Christians into the wilderness, the prophecy is also representative of God's deliverance of His Church as a whole, even today.

The text continues with: *So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood.¹⁶ But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.*

What we are seeing here is continues references back to the way Israel was pursued by its enemies in the Old Testament. Specifically we should be reminded of the exodus. Recall Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt and then being trapped against the Red Sea.

Our text tells us that the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the flood spewed forth from the dragon. What we should be seeing here is that though the world and those in it will often oppose the Church of Christ, they will not be able to defeat her, because God is protecting her. These events that are being spoken of here in Revelation 12 are those same events that Jesus spoke about in Matthew 24 when He said:

For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.²² And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

The disciples had been warned that these things were coming, but they also were told that for their sake these days would be shortened. The

Dragon would rage. He would persecute and kill many, but the Lord has His hand on His church and He would protect them.

When the Roman armies finally stormed into the city and ultimately destroyed the temple that stood there, the woman, representing the people of God had long since fled the city. David Chilton said this: "The land of Israel swallows up the river of wrath, absorbing the blow in her place. The destruction of Jerusalem left the true City and Temple unharmed, for they were safe with the Woman, under the shadow of the almighty."

The last verse of our text reads: *And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

In this passage we have seen a lot of detail about how the early Christians were in a battle with the dragon. The reason for this battle is because the dragon is enraged. The text tells us that the dragon goes on to make war with the rest of her offspring. One of the difficulties that some have with this text is how is the church symbolized by both the woman and her offspring? This brings us to an important point. The Church, as an institution is distinguishable from her children.

The Church is the totality of all its members, and yet in other ways the individual members of the church are also related to the to her in the same way that children are related to their mother.

We have to remember that the same way the dragon attacked the woman, he also rages against the children of the woman. These children are then identified as all those who "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

In most of these message I have mentioned the verse in the Revelation 12:11 which speaks of the way in which the dragon is defeated, "*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.*"

The Lord Jesus Christ has definitively conquered the dragon. Today's passage speaks of this victory and it also speaks of Christ's ascension to

His throne of glory. From there he strikes through kings in the day of his wrath, and he does this for the benefit of His people. And they are identified as the obedient. The ones who obey the Lord, and keep His testimony. We speak God's words after Him, when we do this we speak with His authority. By our self, we have no authority, it is only when we are obedient to His commands and speak His words that we can begin to see what God is doing.

The dragon rages, and there is no area, not one square inch of creation, that the battle is not made manifest. The Lord has already won the victory, When the Church of Jesus Christ walks in obedience we will triumph.