

The Protection and Deliverance of the Godly Remnant of Jewish People

Revelation 12

Revelation 12 - *"Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. ² Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. ³ And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. ⁴ His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. ⁵ She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. ⁶ Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.*

⁷ And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, ⁸ but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. ⁹ So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. ¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. ¹¹ 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. ¹² 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."

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. 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."

Background Notes

In the last verse of Revelation 11, in his vision the apostle John saw the Ark of the Covenant through the open doors of a Temple in heaven. We mentioned in our last talk that the literal ancient Ark of the Covenant is probably not presently in heaven. Because the Book of Revelation is a vision, with lots of symbols, we believe John's vision of the Ark signifies that God has not forgotten His covenant with His people Israel. The Ark of the Covenant represented God's loyal presence among His people. Even though His chosen people broke the Mosaic Covenant and rejected their Messiah, God has not forgotten the covenant He made with His people.

The Old Testament prophets predicted a “New Covenant” that God would make with His people Israel. Read Jeremiah 31 in this connection. This would be possible because the Messiah would die for the sins of the people, and His blood would be placed on the mercy seat of the Ark, in the presence of God. The New Testament tells us that the blood of Christ was shed not only for the sins of the people of Israel, but for the sins of the whole world. We also know that the blessings of the New Covenant have been extended to the Church.

However, God has **not** forgotten about His covenant relationship with Israel, the Jewish people! Remember, the Abrahamic Covenant was an unconditional covenant that was made with the literal, natural descendants of Abraham – forever! God has not thrown out His promises to the Jewish people. Thus, the symbol of the Ark of the Covenant seen in the last verse of Revelation 11 is a fitting introduction to the topic of Revelation 12, in which God provides miraculous protection and deliverance of the godly remnant of Jewish people during the Great Tribulation. This protection and deliverance is right in line with His loyal covenant promises.

Doctrinal Points

1. The woman with child represents Israel.

In verses 1-5, the child that is born to the woman is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Verse 5: *“She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.”* This verse speaks of the birth and ascension of Jesus. Psalm 2, a Messianic Psalm, makes it clear that it is the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who will rule the nations with a rod of iron. Psalm 2:7 - *“I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.’”*

So, the Child in Revelation 12 is the Lord Jesus, but who is the woman who gave birth to the Child? She is certainly not the Church. Is she the virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus? But how could it be Mary, when verse 6 says, *“Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days...”*? When did Mary, the mother of Jesus, “flee into the wilderness”? And verse 13 says, *“Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child.”* When was the virgin Mary persecuted?

The time frame of “one thousand two hundred and sixty days” (v6) are clearly the same “one thousand two hundred and sixty days” as in Revelation 11:3 - *“And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”* In our talk on Revelation 11 we noted that the 1260 days are the 42 months, or the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation, known as the Great Tribulation. So, the woman can’t be the Virgin Mary.

The woman must be the nation of Israel. The first hint is in verse 1, where there are parallels to Joseph’s dream about Israel 9 (Genesis 37). It was the nation of Israel that gave birth to the Messiah who will one day rule the world. It is the

nation of Israel that has been persecuted, and will be persecuted during the Great Tribulation -- in fact, the Tribulation is known as "the time of Jacob's trouble" in Jeremiah 30:7. However, many people in the end time persecuted nation of Israel will be preserved and protected by God Himself when they flee into the wilderness.

Some commentators say that "the wilderness" of verse 6 is the present day "wilderness of nations" where the Jewish people have been miraculously preserved for two thousand years. While it is true that God has preserved His people over the past two thousand years, we believe that the 1260 days of verse 6 are not the present time, but are specifically the time of the 3 ½ year Great Tribulation, called "*time and times and half a time*"(v14). The present time, the Church Age, is skipped over in Revelation 12 between verses 5 and 6.

Many commentators have suggested that the place of protection for the Jewish remnant of the future will be Petra, in present-day Jordan. We can't be sure, but it is a possibility. The two wings of the great eagle (v14) are probably not planes of the United States Air Force, as some sensationalist interpretations of Revelation have suggested! Most likely, the term "eagle's wings" are figurative for God's care of His people, as we read in Exodus 19:4 "*You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself.*"

In verse 15 we see that Satan will try to destroy the Jewish people with a flood, but God will protect Israel with an earthquake that drains the water. Certainly this could be a literal flood of water and a literal earthquake. The Arabah wilderness in southern Israel is below sea level and a geologic fault runs right through it, so this flood and earthquake could be quite literal. In any case, the woman with child represents Israel.

2. The dragon with seven heads represents Satan.

Verses 3-4: "*And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.*" Verse 9 leaves no doubt that the great red dragon represents Satan, "*that serpent of old.*" Remember Satan's attempt through Herod to destroy the infant Jesus by having all the male babies in Bethlehem killed?

Verse 4 is probably a reference to Satan's past rebellion, and a third of the stars may indicate that a third of the holy angels rebelled and fell with Satan. Some of these spirit beings are the demons and evil spirits that exist now on this earth. Verses 7-9 mention war in heaven, with the holy archangel Michael and his angelic forces will fight against Satan and his fallen angels. Job 1-2 and other Scriptures tell us that at the present time Satan and some of his fallen angels have access to heavenly realms. However, Michael and the holy angels will defeat Satan and the fallen angels, and they will be thrown out of the heavenly realms down to earth. The time frame here is most likely the middle of the Tribulation period, at the beginning of the Great Tribulation.

Satan, probably knowing that he has only a short time left, will persecute the woman, that is, Israel (v13), but God will protect His chosen people. Verse 17 says that Satan will especially persecute the godly remnant of Jewish believers during the Tribulation period. From what we read in Revelation 6, under the fifth Seal, we know that a number of these Jewish believers will be martyred. Verse 11 here indicates that they will be faithful, even to death. They will overcome the great dragon because of the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony. The dragon with seven heads represents Satan.

Practical Application

Thank the Lord that our accuser is no match for our Advocate!

In verse 10, the kingdom of our Lord on this earth is anticipated as Satan is thrown down to earth. In this verse Satan is called “the accuser of the brethren.” He accuses all believers before God day and night -- and he probably doesn’t have to look too closely at our lives to find something to use in his accusations. But praise the Lord for the truth of 1 John 2:1, “.... *if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*”

The Lord Jesus gave His own life to declare us righteous, and He is our Advocate when Satan accuses us of sin! In other words, He is our defense attorney. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself defends us when Satan accuses us. Thank the Lord that our accuser is no match for our Advocate!