

LESSONS ON PREDESTINATION #42
"War on Earth" (Part Two)
(Scriptures from NKJV)

Revelation 12:13-17:

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

INTRODUCTION: We continue today where we left off last time with the dragon attempting to overcome the woman who has given birth to the male child. The overall picture is that:

(1) The dragon (Satan) resumes his persecution of the woman (church) on earth who has given birth to the Male-Child. Verse 13.

(2) She is given the wings of a great eagle which enables her to escape from the deceptive powers of the dragon. Verse 14.

(3) She flees into a wilderness (place of protection) where God has prepared a place for her. Verse 14.

(4) There she is sheltered throughout a period of time expressed as a ***"time, and times, and half a time from the presence of the serpent."***

This is the same time period as expressed in verse six as being 1260 days.

(5) Not being able to follow the woman into the desert, the serpent attempts to flood her out of the wilderness into the surrounding world where the dragon lives. This he does by a flood of waters (lies) from his mouth. Verse 15.

(6) The earth (God's providence) comes to the aid of the woman and opens its mouth and swallows up the flood waters from the dragon's mouth. Verse 16.

(7) The dragon, being unable to conquer the woman, makes war with her individual children who are committed to God's word and His Son, Jesus Christ. Verse 17.

(8) The meaning of these occurrences must be found in the symbolic interpretation of the figures described.

(9) The symbols in Revelation are primarily based on the occurrences in the lives of the Old Testament saints prior to the birth of Christ, and are spiritually applied to strengthen and nourish the saints of God who live after the enthronement of Christ in His kingdom.

(10) The purpose of the book is to reveal Jesus Christ. This is seen in the following verses:

Revelation 1:1-3 - "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near."

Revelation 1:4, 9 - "John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne . . . I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."

Revelation 19:10 - "And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, 'See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.'"

(11) In the introduction to the Book of Revelation, as found in the New King James Version, as published by Broadman and Holman, we read these words:

Just as Genesis is the book of beginnings, Revelation is the book of consummation. In it, the divine program of redemption is brought to fruition, and the holy name of God is vindicated before all creation. Although there are numerous prophecies in the Gospels and Epistles, Revelation is the only New Testament book that focuses primarily on prophetic events. Its title means "unveiling" or "disclosure." Thus, the book is an unveiling of the character and program of God. Penned by John during his exile on the island of Patmos, Revelation centers around visions and symbols of the resurrected Christ, who alone has authority to judge the earth, to remake it, and to rule it in righteousness.

(12) In reference to the verses found in verses 13-17 of our text, we have covered the meaning of the:

- (a) The woman on earth
- (b) The purpose of the dragon's attack
- (c) The prepared place in the wilderness

(13) We must now try to discern the meaning of the:

- (a) Time element involved - v. 14
- (b) The serpent's method of temptation - v. 15
- (c) The serpent's motive for temptation - v. 15
- (d) God's providential means of overcoming the dragon - v. 16
- (e) The remnant of the woman's seed - v. 17

A. THE TIME ELEMENT INVOLVED - verse 14 - *"time, and times, and half a time."*

1. This is the same time period as the 1260 days of verse 6.
2. "Time" = 360 days, times = 720 days, half a time = 180 days = total of 1260 days.
3. This is the same period during which the two witnesses shall witness in Revelation 11:1-3 - ***"Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, 'Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.'" 42 months X 30 days = 1260 days.***
4. This is same time period during which the antichrist exercises the power of his kingdom. In Revelation 13:1-5 we read: ***"Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?' And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was***

given authority to continue for forty-two months." (Cf. Also Daniel 7:15-28.)

5. What does this period of three and one-half years bring to the minds of God's people in John's day?

a. In Revelation 11:3-6, the two witnesses prophecy during the 1260 day period, or the 3½ years.

b. Their ministry shall resemble the ministry of Elijah and Moses. In Revelation 11:6 we read, ***"These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy (Elijah); and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire (Moses)."*** Those who believe in a literal interpretation of this section, believe that the three and one-half years (1260 days, 42 months) refer to the last half of what they call a seven-year tribulation period, and that the witnesses shall be Moses and Elijah. This is speculation in its wildest form. Moses and Elijah have been in a state of sinless perfection for thousands of years. Are they actually going to be reincarnated in real bodies and then die (cf. vs. 7,8) and then go back to heaven again in verses 11 and 12? If they previously existed in a sinless state, only to come to earth again and die, then what sins brought about their death? Is it not true that the wages of sin is death? Had these not already been made sinless in their heavenly existence? Time will not allow us to deal any further with the two witnesses as they do not apply to our text in Revelation 12:13-17. Our interest is the meaning of the 1260 days, or the time, times, and half a time.

c. The symbolic method is a better way to interpret the text. The three and one-half years are one-half of the number seven. Seven is the number of completeness. It is also the number of God's perfection and completeness of His work. In Genesis 2:1-3 we read, ***"Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.*** Since all agree that seven is the number of completeness, and God completed His creative week in seven days, then the number 3½ is an incomplete number in need of another 3½ to bring it to a complete seven. Since the events in the 3½ years all occur sometime after the first coming of Christ, we can conclude that we are dealing with God's description of His providential workings in the history of the present world. Christ's appearance is at the center of that history. We speak of two time periods, namely before Christ and after Christ. If we use the number seven as a symbolic number, indicating the complete time period of the history of the world, both before and after

Christ, then it becomes clear that the 3½ years described in Revelation refers to the period after the coming and exaltation of Jesus Christ, to the end of the world. Others who hold to this view include Hoeksema, Lenski, Kistemaker, and several others. If the advocates of the literal view object and say this is mere speculation and mysticism, we remind them there is not a single reference to a seven year tribulation found anywhere in the book. If the 3½ years refer to the last half of a literal tribulation period, where is the first half of seven found? The attempt to insert the 70th week of Daniel into the scene does not prove satisfactory. (Cf. Daniel 9:24-27).

I did a search of the use of numbers in the Book of Revelation. Here is what I discovered. As I read these to you, try to discern which are symbolic and which are literal. I found 7 churches, 7 Spirits, 7 lampstands, 7 stars, 10 days of tribulation, 7 Spirits of God, 24 thrones, 24 elders, 7 lamps of fire, 4 living creatures, 6 wings, 7 horns, 7 eyes, 10 thousand X 10 thousand, thousands of thousands, 6 seals, 144 thousand, 12 thousand, 7th seal, 7 angels, 7 trumpets, 1/3 of mankind, 2 hundred million, 3 plagues, 7 thunders, 42 months, 2 witnesses, 1260 days, 2 olive trees and lampstands, 3 ½ half days, 1/10 of the city, 7000 killed, 12 stars, 7 heads, 10 horns, 7 diadems, 1/3 of the stars, 2 wings, time, times, and half a time, 7 heads, 10 horns, 10 crowns, 42 months, 666, 1600 furlongs, 7 plagues, 7 golden bowls, 7 heads, 10 horns, 7 mountains, 7 kings, 5 fallen kings, 8th beast, 1 hour, 1000 years, 12 gates, 3 gates, 12000 furlongs, 144 cubits, 12 fruits. This is enough to cause all interpreters to exercise caution in insisting that the numbers should all be interpreted literally!

d. Summary of the days, months, years, times.

Three and one-half is half of God's providentially completed work in the history of the world. The first three and one-half years symbolize the period of time from the creation of the world to the appearance of Jesus Christ in history as a man. The last three and one-half years symbolize the time from the enthronement of Christ to the end of historical time.

B. THE SERPENT'S METHOD OF TEMPTATION - verse 15 - *"So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman."*

1. The flood waters represent the tempting lies of the devil to carry away the people of God (church) from their prepared place of humble dependance upon God and contentment as God's servants, over into the world of Satan where pride, dominion and self-advancement are manifest as the source of the creature's happiness.

2. Cf. The tempting of Christ in the wilderness - Luke 4:5-7.

3. Cf. The tempting of believers by the world - I John 2:15-17.

C. THE SERPENT'S MOTIVE FOR TEMPTATION - verse 15 - *"that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood."*

1. His design is to deceive the church as an institution by introducing false doctrines and practices. Back in verse 9, it is said of Satan that he **"deceives the whole world."** When he saw that he could not pursue her into the wilderness, he cast a stream of water after the woman in order that she might be carried away from her place of security.

2. Herman Hoeksema makes the observation that when the devil: saw that he could not pursue her into the wilderness, cast a stream of water after the woman, in order that she might be carried away with the flood. Evidently this does not mean that the devil makes an attempt directly to destroy the woman while she is in the wilderness. On the contrary, especially the original gives us reason to believe that the purpose is different. He knows that he cannot approach the woman in her isolation in the desert. He cannot touch her. She must remain there. He must leave her alone. Hence, he casts a stream of water after her, that she might be borne up by that flood and be carried out of the wilderness. Especially the word used here in the original gives us that very idea. He does not mean to drown her: that would be impossible. But he means to lift her from her isolation. And therefore he casts a stream after her, in order that she might be carried away by the stream, and thus be borne into the world from which she fled. (Hoeksema, *Behold He Cometh*, p. 447)

3. The devil realizes that the strength of the church lies in her isolation from the powers of the world, and as long as the church remains in this state of separation he cannot do anything against her. Thus he attempts to unite or mix the church in with the world and offer her the power to grow in influence over the culture she is in. Then he can be confident that her strength will be gone. This is done by seeking to establish state churches like the church of Rome, and the many churches which were formed in the Reformation. All of these have proven to be disastrous, and have gone off into apostasy.

Another method he has used is to introduce liberalism into churches resulting in the loss of confidence in the Bible as the word of God. Still another way is seen in the way evangelical churches have appealed to the world through the use of worldly methods to attract people to attend their worship services. This has produced pride rather than humility, and confidence has been placed in the methods of church growth rather than the

preaching of the word. The church becomes ruled by the worldly powers, rather than the Holy Spirit.

D. GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL MEANS OF OVERCOMING THE DRAGON -verse 16 - *"the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood."*

1. In Psalm 24:1 we read, *"The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein."*

2. God has sovereign control over all the affairs of heaven and earth to swallow up the lies of the devil. He can use either natural revelation such as Psalm 19, or the special revelation found in the Bible. He can raise up gifted men in various ways to preach and teach His word either in written or oral forms. Satan shall not destroy or swallow up the church through false teachings and hostility.

E. THE REMNANT OF THE WOMAN'S SEED - verse 17 - *"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."*

1. Question: What is the difference between the woman and the rest of her seed?

2. Answer: The woman is the corporate number of all the elect, while the rest of her seed are the individuals who individually make up the corporate body.

3. Hoeksema gives further clarity on the matter when he says:

If we have understood the text correctly thus far, it is not difficult to understand the last verse of this passage, where we read that the dragon, being enraged with the woman and yet realizing his impotency to destroy her as such, goes to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

At first sight we may think that this is a somewhat strange expression. Is the church after all not the sum-total of all her seed? And how, then, must we conceive of this idea that the devil, after he has failed to destroy the church as such, can still turn to her children, to the rest of her seed? This is not difficult to understand, however. The woman represents the church as such, the church as a visible institution in the world. And as such she is the mother of the true spiritual children of God. At first the devil makes the attempt to destroy the church as an institution by making her part of his own kingdom and by uniting her with the power of the world. But when this fails, he turns to the individual believers, in order that he may persecute and destroy them and bring them to apostasy. These individual members move about in the world. In every sphere of life they claim that they must live

according to the principles of the Word of God, that they must keep His commandments, and that they must proclaim that Jesus Christ is King over all. And so they attempt to realize these principles in the midst of the world. They have been brought up in the commandments of God by their mother, the church; and they have learned to embrace and keep the testimony of Jesus. And therefore, in every sphere of life, in the home and in society and in the state, wherever they go and whatever they do, they keep these commandments and refuse to live from the principles of the world. (Hoeksema, *Behold He Cometh*, p. 448-49).

4. As we close the twelfth chapter of Revelation, we have seen Satan's failure to overthrow the throne of God. He has failed in the Garden of Eden; He has failed to destroy the line through which Christ was to be born; He failed to destroy Him in His birth; He failed at the cross; He failed at His ascension; He failed in his war in heaven. Yet he continues to fight on here on earth. What is his last hope since his time is short. It is to separate but one of the elect believers from the flock making up Christ's sheep. If he can deceive one of the elect into apostatizing from the faith, he can charge God of not being able to achieve His eternal purpose. He thus wins the war after losing so many battles.

The question now becomes: Is it possible for one of God's elect sheep to be deceived so as to renounce Christ and fall away and be lost? The Bible and the Reformed (Calvinistic) confessions say "no." The consistent Arminian and free will confessions say "yes." In doing so, they are teaching the devil's doctrine of a limited will in God and an unlimited power in the creature's will.

The issue is addressed in the fifth point of Calvinism known as *The Preservation and Perseverance of The Saints*. If the Lord allows, this will be covered in detail in a later section. We can only answer briefly for the present. Here are several scriptures to consider.

a. Matthew 24:24 - Jesus says, **"For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect."** Satan will never be able to deceive the elect. In John 10:27-30, Jesus said, **"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one."**

b. II Timothy 2:19 - **"Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.'"** The foundation of God is a reference

to the elect people of God who make up the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven. God the Father protects them, so that none is lost. God the Son owns them. They were given to Him. He bought or redeemed them with His precious blood. God, the Holy Spirit, certifies they are the sons of God. (Romans 8:16). This is what seals them. William Hendriksen, in his *Commentary on II Timothy*, states it so well in this manner:

How do believers experience the comfort of the seal? The answer is: by taking to heart what is written on the seal! The seal bears two closely related inscriptions. *God's* decree and *man's* responsibility receive equal recognition:

The first inscription deals the deathblow to *Pelagianism*; the second, to *fatalism*.

The first is dated *in eternity*; the second, *in time*.

The first is a declaration which we must *believe*; the second, an exhortation which we must *obey*.

The first exalts *God's predestinating mercy*; the second emphasizes *man's inevitable duty*.

The first refers to the *security*; the second to the *purity* of the church. (Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary*, p. 268).

It is against those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ that Satan seeks to draw away into apostasy. Humble service is the prepared strength of God's people. We do not fight pride with pride, but pride with humility.