

## Revelation- A Quick Review up to Chapter 12

Chapter 12 brings us to a sobering and eye opening transition in the Book of Revelation. It is the second major section of the Book. Up to this point, following his general commission to record and proclaim all that he sees, to the seven churches of Asia (in chapter 1), John has seen things that have exposed historical realities, which concern the underlying flow and purpose of history (from the standpoint of God) in conjunction with the *present* and the *future* (that is, the present and future *from John's perspective*). John has been given a *revelation*; he has been given a message that is meant to pull back the curtain so that he (and the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ) could understand what “really is happening” as history unfolds, in the light of what “seems to be” happening from the standpoint of blind and fallen mankind. And the ultimate end in the receiving of this revelation, is to compel the people of God to stand fast, to persevere, to overcome, in light of the guaranteed victory won in the death and resurrection of the Christ, and in light of the foretold, real opposition, which will constantly come against the church throughout the course of the church age (beginning at the resurrection of Christ and continuing up to the time of Christ's final, visible return). There will be physical persecutions for some (church members will be afflicted, maimed and even killed for the sake of the Gospel). There will be spiritual persecution for some (the constant threat of doctrinal compromise in order to appeal to the masses will come against the church). And there will be material temptations for some (all manner of lusts, wealth and the sparkling vanity of material possessions will entice the church throughout the history of the church age, seeking to sway her love away from Christ and toward the lustful worldly idolatries, presented by the sensual whore of Babylon).

In chapters 2 and 3, John had been given seven letters, which addressed the specific, present circumstances of the seven churches of Asia; issues which relate to every church of all times throughout all of history. These letters enable us to see the very specific ways in which the enemies of Christ come against the church, seeking to flush out the light of her lampstand, so that she is rendered useless for declaring and revealing the glory of God to the world. Most of the churches were compromising in various ways; they were caving into the threats and temptations, cast upon them by the opposition. Several had some good and notable qualities, and two had *only* notable qualities mentioned, giving us patterns that we ought to follow, as we serve Christ in our own age, anticipating His final visible return, where He will bring history to an end

and the final judgment upon those who remain compromised, failing to persevere and overcome. These letters revealed present day realities (during the time of John), and were to be addressed, especially in light of the future realities that were to come, in accordance with the revelations revealed in the chapters that follow.

But first, John takes a journey into the glorious courtroom of God, where he beholds two critical, *ever present* realities, which are to be adopted and embraced by the conscience of the church, if she is to ultimately persevere and overcome. First, John sees the throne of God, and the glory of the One who sits upon that throne, resting at the center of every single existing thing in heaven and on earth and everywhere. And this vision was to remind us that God is the “omni-sovereign” (the always/all sovereign) holy ruler of all things. Our glorious, holy Creator is unraveling history, wholly and completely in accordance with His righteous, divine will, and He will not; and He cannot fail. This is a pillar, upon which we are to rest our consciences and our very souls, as we strive unto godly living and holiness in the face of even great opposition throughout the history of the church age. And then, secondly, we are given a second pillar, upon which we are to rest our souls and consciences. In chapter five, we are reminded of the ultimate victory, which has been given us in Christ, the Lamb that was slain, who alone, was worthy to unfold the victorious history of God’s revealed will, given in the scroll, which was sealed and firmly held in the right hand of God’s power. It is in Christ, that we constantly find the “omni-present” (the ever present) grace, which is needed to stand firm to the end. We who are in Christ, have been sealed in Christ; we are in union with Him; we are seated with Him in the heavenly places; we are measured out in the Most holy place of God’s heavenly tabernacle; we are untouchable in the most profound sense. In other words, though our bodies; though our flesh and blood may be torn along the way; though we may lose much from the world’s standpoint, possibly up to and including our very lives...our faith will not fail! What we have in glory; our inheritance, cannot be taken away from us, because worthy is the Lamb that was slain on our behalf!

Following this, from chapters six up to eleven (where we left off last time), we have scrolled through all of history from two different standpoints, obtaining a visual of the types of judgments that will come upon the world, while the church is heavily persecuted and oppressed throughout the entire history of the church age. The judgments, though partial in their scope of

devastation, increase in intensity throughout the course of history, and culminate in ultimate, universal devastation at the time of Christ's return. The "seven seals" have taken us through many general disasters that come upon the earth, all throughout history, and right to the end. The "seven trumpet judgments," greater in their scope of judgment and more intense than the "seven seals," follow that same line of history (from a different and more severe angle), likewise ultimately leading to the final judgment that comes when Christ visibly returns.

And in the midst of these often horrendously described judgments, just prior to the final seal and the final trumpet, we are given a comforting reminder; an interlude, describing God's sovereign care for the church throughout this whole history. Indeed, the church suffers greatly; the church is attacked severely, and in the end, when God is finished with the witness of the church, her light is turned off. In a general sense, she is killed and the world; the enemies of Christ think that they have won, when in reality they have only extinguished the very light that could have saved their now, wholly condemned souls. In a very short time, the church is resurrected victorious, to the world's great dismay. Christ returns and brings judgment upon the world; He carries His glorious and complete Bride home to glory, and the life of heavenly perfection, love and eternal joy begins for the church (the Bride of Christ), while the wicked, who cannot stand in the judgment, are cast into hell forever and ever, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. The church, which has suffered greatly in this life, is now at rest. And the world, which has persecuted and afflicted Christ's church, is eternally afflicted and tormented in the fiery pit of hell.

Enter chapters twelve and following. Up to this point, we have been given a very small glimpse of the evil, which operates behind the scenes of history, throughout the course of the church age. In other words, there are demonic powers and forces at work here, throughout all of history, utilizing governments and cults and false religions and material temptations as a means of attacking the church throughout her course to glory. And God would have us well aware of these realities, so that we can get a clear view of what is really going on, and what we are really up against. We might think twice about compromising with any of our worldly opposition, when we understand "what is really going on behind the scenes." And we might think twice about caving into the threats, lies and accusations of this opposition when we consider the end of this opposition, all of which has been and will be ultimately defeated by Christ! In chapters twelve

and following, God pulls back the curtain to the heavenly realm as it were; he carries us from this physical world and into the spiritual realm, so that we can be prepared to do battle on God's terms, while sticking close to, and abiding in the One who "sticks closer than a brother," namely, the victorious Lord Jesus Christ, without Whom, we stand no chance in the battle.

And it is here, brethren, that a great and significant question is answered: "Why is there still warfare for the church, since Christ has already come and conquered in His death and resurrection? Why does the church suffer throughout a history of ongoing tension, catastrophe, chaos and devastation? Why is the world as it is in the present? What is really going on here?"

Well, here in chapter twelve, we take a close, visible look at the answer to these questions.

### I. **The Two Signs** (read Revelation 12:1-6 again)

Genesis 3:14&15, "So the Lord God said to the serpent: Because you have done this [deceived the woman into sinning against God], you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise His heel."

These two great signs in Revelation point to the carrying out of that promise.

The two signs here are the woman, who represents the church, and the dragon, who represents the devil. And the child, who comes forth from the woman; the child who comes forth from this glorious woman (who is made radiant and glorious through the very work of this child), is the Lord Jesus Christ.

### II. **The Message Conveyed by these Signs**

From the beginning, following the fall of man, when God had pronounced the curse against the serpent, there was indeed enmity between the woman and the serpent, and the Seed of

the woman and the seed of the serpent. Throughout the entire history of the Old Testament, the devil has done everything he could to destroy the traveling seed of the woman. He has conjured up all kinds of opposition and persecution; he has conjured up all manner of religious heresies, attempting to utterly defile and destroy the true church, and he has used all manner of deceptive lustful temptations to draw the true church away from the Lord (kind of like the means he uses to strive to destroy the church today). But the whole time, by the grace of God, the Messianic line has been preserved, there has always been a remnant by grace in Israel, right up until the Messiah was born. Be it through the intercessory prayers of servants like Moses and Jeremiah and Daniel or the powerful judges he had raised up or the preservation of the Davidic kingdom, God has secured the line of the Messiah. And out of Israel came the Messiah.

But right to the end, the devil sought to devour the child, didn't he? Through Herod, he sought to destroy the male child right from the outset, but God preserved His Son in Egypt. And the devil himself sought to tempt and defeat the Messiah, but ultimately he failed every time. And then, there was the cross, the place where the Messiah's heel would be bruised. Indeed, Christ, bearing the sins of His people suffered the severest attacks by Satan and man, and most of all, He endured the full weight of God's wrath, until He successfully completed His mission and died, securing the salvation of His elect. And He was raised up from the dead three days later, given all authority in heaven and on earth, before ascending to the right hand of the Power on high, where He still reigns to this day, until He completes His work of building His church, against which the gates of hell will never prevail.

The devil; the dragon tried his best, all along, to thwart the plan and purpose of God, but he failed and his doom is now sealed and soon to be complete. So what happens now? The woman; the church who brought forth the child, still remaining on the earth for 1260 days (according to the symbol), flees into the wilderness, where God nourishes and cares for her, as she faces the fierce opposition of the dragon, who now turns his attention toward destroying the woman, since he can no longer try to defeat the child. In other words, all he has left is rage for the child, and he only has a short time to exercise it. And since he cannot touch the child, who has ascended to the right hand of the throne of God, he pours forth his vengeful wrath against the woman; the church; the apple of God's eye. And this is what greatly concerns us now.

### **III. Satan is Cast out of Heaven**

In verses 7-12, we were given a detailed description of how the Messianic Seed actually defeated the dragon, from the standpoint of heaven. Having conquered sin and death by means of His own suffering and cross, the devil (the serpent of old, the adversary and slanderer) was left powerless in his ability to accuse the beloved elect of God. And so, there was war in heaven, and Michael and his angels defeated the dragon and his angels, casting them out of heaven and down to the earth, because there was no more place found for them in heaven. The adversary was shut down. He could bring no legal argument against the people of God, no matter how sinful they have been, because the cross of Christ now stood in the defendant's corner, as a sign of justice being fulfilled on behalf of God's elect.

Recognizing that he has been defeated and that he is incapable of destroying the Messianic Seed, the "cast out of heaven" dragon then turns to direct his attention toward the "woman" (the mother of the Seed; the church) and vents out his wrath toward her, seeing that his time on earth is short. He is a defeated foe, bearing in his own being, his inevitable coming destruction (represented by his crushed head), and so, he aims to do all that he can to spew forth his wrath against Christ, by contending with His glorious bride, the church.

And so, the woman, the church, flees into the wilderness for 1260 days (a symbol for the duration of the church age), where God prepares a place for and nourishes her.

### **IV. The Woman (the church) is Persecuted**

This morning, we continue on with this theme, getting a better picture of what happens to the woman, the church, while she is in the wilderness. And this is especially relevant for us, because it provides us with a general understanding of what history will look like, following the earthly ministry of Christ, especially from the standpoint of heaven and the church. You see, in the span of the last 2000 years, the world has given us an interpretation of history that fails to elevate the life of the church to its proper central position. From the standpoint of heaven, the church is the center of history; it is the focal point of God's plan of redemption, and everything else in this world ultimately exists to serve in the building of Christ's church. The

cover page articles in our newspapers and magazines, and the front row events and people, documented in our news forecasts, are all secondary and minor issues from the standpoint of heaven. Heaven's eye is fixed on the church, and Revelation chapter 12 confirms this.

All that being said, what then happens to the woman, the church, when she flees into the wilderness? Here we find the serpent using another means of attack in seeking to destroy the church, again, especially during, but by far not limited to, the infant stage of the church in the first century. He spews forth "water out of his mouth like a flood...that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood." And the implication here is that the devil seeks to infiltrate the church with false doctrines, heresies and teachings, which would contaminate the Gospel message and thereby destroy the light and witness of the church. He would seek to carry her away in a flood of lies; significant self-destructive lies, which would serve to collapse the church, the pillar and ground of God's truth. Throughout the Epistles, we find the writers contending with all manner of heresies and false teachings, which were beginning to infiltrate the early church, because the writers knew very well that doctrine is critical.

But we find that God always provides His protective care for His true church. While many cardboard churches will fall and be carried away by a flood of lies, the true Bride of Christ will always stand, because the earth opens its mouth and swallows up the flood which the dragon spews out of its mouth. God exposes, and then drains the poisonous heresies of their power, protecting His true church by the Scriptures, which they unflinchingly stand upon, even at the expense of their very lives. Especially at her infant stage, such care from our sovereign God was critical. And so, the church was faithfully and securely established on the Rock of Christ's victory and the testimony of the apostles and the prophets. The dragon's attempts at seeking to destroy the church as a whole (as even a concept), from the beginning, have failed. When such attacks fail; when the church comes of age, the dragon is enraged. And where then does the dragon turn his attention?

"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" (verse 17).

The church is birthed; her influence spreads; the Gospel is worldwide; churches are planted all over the world; the Body of Christ has come to age and has impacted the whole world...the dragon was incapable of flushing out the whole concept and reality from the beginning, and so, he turns his attention then, especially toward persecuting her individual members. He moves from a broad sweep attack, to attacking individual members of the body, attempting to put out whatever light he can. He sees those who are serious about the things of Christ; He sees those who do not simply provide lip service, but who actually strive to keep the commandments of God and who have the true testimony of Christ within them, and like a fierce lion goes after its prey, he goes after them. He afflicts, he persecutes, he sows seeds of discord and envy and pride among brethren; he sets them up as wrong doers before the eyes of the world; he uses every *physical* attack possible, striving to destroy them or to make “Job curse God.”

And brethren, this is where we are today. We are in the wilderness, we are attacked as a church, we are attacked as individuals...but God promises to nourish and care for His true elect, as they endure even to the expense of their own physical lives and well being. In the chapters ahead, you are introduced to the dragon’s main weapons of warfare, namely, the beasts of physical and spiritual persecution, and the “whore of Babylon” who entices and drags away lustful souls by means of her worldly allurements. And we are called to be ready, to stand fast in Christ; to look unto and live in light of His return...to overcome, in light of what we know to be true underneath the surface of a grossly deceived and fallen world! And only those who, “love not *this life* to the end,” can possibly survive the attacks of the enemy. His attacks are all directed toward “this life” realities. That is his only means of infiltration. And so, if we are seated in heaven with Christ, we will stand firm to the end and overcome. If our hold is on Christ and not this world; if Christ is truly our portion and inheritance, then the enemy, whose attacks are “this world” attacks, will truly be powerless against us. But on the contrary, if we are holding on to this life, his attacks will penetrate our armor and frustrate both our growth and our ability to shine forth the light of Christ, as a lampstand in a dark and fallen world.

AMEN!!!