

The Ancient Spiritual War—Part 1

Revelation 12:1-6

Will you join me this morning in opening your Bibles as we come, once again, to our study of the Revelation of Jesus Christ? We find ourselves this morning in chapter 12 and we will be examining verses one through six. Let me read this portion of Scripture to you.

Revelation 12 beginning in verse one.

And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; and she was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven, and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child. And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she might be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.¹

As we return this morning to the Revelation of Jesus Christ may I remind you that these are his words regarding the pre kingdom judgments that will occur prior to his glorious return. And, frankly, this is an amplification of what he stated in his Olivet discourse in the gospels where he greatly expands and details his references in particular to Daniel's 70th week judgment commonly known as the tribulation.

Now by way of context, we have concluded chapter 11 which has taken us up to the middle of the week or the middle of the tribulation, and it is important for you to keep the big picture. So bear with me for a moment as I kind of take you up rather high as we look down upon what has transpired thus far in our study of revelation and what will transpire before the Lord returns.

Midway in the tribulation, outraged by the two witnesses and the testimony of the 144,000, there will be the conversion of many Jews as well as many Gentiles, and during that time the satanically controlled antichrist—according to Daniel's prophecy in Daniel 9:27, will "put an end to sacrifice and offering and on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation." In other words, Satan will defile the temple that he will allow the Jews to build during that time. At that point, more and more Jews will see that they have been duped, duped by a master charlatan whose real agenda is deification. He will demand at that point that the world worship him. They will refuse to worship him and that, of course, will throw gas on the flames of his wounded pride, and at that point the latent anti-Semitism that currently smolders in every corner of the globe today will finally erupt into full flame. And like never before in the history of the world

¹ Revelation 12:1-6.

The Ancient Spiritual War—Part 1

Revelation 12:1-6

God's beloved enemy, the Jew, his covenant people of Israel, will be hunted and will be killed along with many Christians, both Jew and Gentile.

Now, even a casual observer of the world's attitude today towards Jews and Christians will have to admit that there is a powder keg of hatred that is waiting to explode and the tiniest spark could set that off. I experience that; you experience it, as we endeavor to share the gospel of Christ. Just the hate mail that I receive from internet listeners is enough to bear testimony to that. The world hates Christians and they hate Jews. In fact, anti-Semitism is endemic in the human condition. If you want to know the truth about the rise of anti-Semitism today go to the website for the "Tel Aviv University Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Anti-Semitism and Racism" and there you will find a chronicle of the increased number of anti-Semitic crimes that are being committed today around the world.

Now, the drama of the second half of the tribulation is called in Scripture a period of "Jacob's trouble" or "Jacob's distress." It will be a season of unprecedented oppression against Israel. In fact, the prophet Jeremiah tells us in chapter 30 and verse seven, "Alas! for that day is great, there is none like it; and it is the time of Jacob's distress, but he will be saved from it."² Indeed, as Moses described this in Deuteronomy 32:35, this will be "the day of their calamity." Daniel tells us in his prophecy in chapter 12 verse one, "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued."³

Now, Revelation chapter 12—where we are at today—provides the background to this time when Michael, that ancient defender of Israel will arise and do battle with Satan and ultimately defeat him. And we will learn more of that next week when we get to that passage of Scripture. At that point, Satan will be permanently expelled from heaven where he spends part of his time today accusing the saints before the throne of God according to verse 10 of chapter 12. And at that time he will be thrown down to earth permanently where currently he spends the other part of his time roaming about the earth seeking whom he may devour according to 1 Peter 5:8. Today he is deceiving and tempting, influencing, murdering and ruling his diabolical kingdom of darkness through evil men, through false teachers, and through wicked politicians.

After suffering his defeat at the hands of Michael, Satan will then vent his spleen against Israel knowing that his time is short. His passion has always been to utterly eradicate the perfidious, pernicious Jew, to remove them completely from the face of the earth and thereby make it impossible for there to be a kingdom.

Now, Satan's ultimate doom will eventually follow the events of the seventh trumpet that we have studied which will be the seven bowl judgments, but those will not be detailed until later on in chapters 15 through 18. So here in chapter 12 and 13 and 14 there is a

² Jeremiah 30:7.

³ Daniel 12:1.

The Ancient Spiritual War—Part 1

Revelation 12:1-6

parenthesis, a parenthesis that addresses the rise and the fall of the ancient arch enemy of God. These chapters will recapitulate the events of chapters six through 11 that we have studied. It will view them from a different perspective. These chapters will chronicle the career of Satan, the rise and the fall of the counterfeit, unholy trinity of the dragon and the beast and the false prophet. And the sounding of the seventh trumpet in chapter 11, as you will recall, sets all of this into motion. But, again, the details and effects of those final judgments will not be described until chapters 15 through 18. That is when the chronological narrative of the tribulation will resume.

But in this parenthetical section in chapters 12 through 14 we are introduced to seven actors of the tribulation drama. We will meet the “woman” who is Israel. We will meet the “dragon” who is Satan. We will meet the “male child” who is Christ. We will meet Michael who represents the holy angels and the great defender of Israel. We will also be reintroduced to Israel, the remnant of the seed of the woman, and we will meet “the beast out of the sea” who is the antichrist, as well as “the beast out of the earth” who is the false prophet, the false religious leader of that time. This is truly an astounding cast of characters that will take center stage in the final days of human history.

This morning we will examine these first six verses that will take us all the way back to the beginning where we read of Satan’s original rebellion, reminding us of his relentless efforts to destroy Israel and thwart the redemptive purposes of God and prevent the kingdom from ever being established.

And, friends, think about this. What an enormous privilege—and this goes over in my mind repeatedly as I meditate upon these truths during the week and prepare to share with you what the Spirit of God would have me help you understand—what an enormous privilege to look at these amazing truths. What a testimony of what the Lord promised in chapter one verse three. “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.”⁴

Indeed, every week some internet listeners and viewers will violently attack the Lord through me, through what is coming from this pulpit, and, of course, that is to be expected. But whenever this happens I find myself as I read their vitriol on the email, I find myself being overwhelmed with gratitude for the Lord’s mercy and his grace in my life in that he gave me, as well as all believers, the capacity to see these truths and to understand them and to apply them to our heart, something that these poor souls may never be able to see. Beloved, never underestimate the gift of the indwelling Spirit of God. Never underestimate the power of his Word. Never ever mitigate the blessedness of the Word of God that so many people have died for. Because of this, we are able to understand where we came from, why we are here, how we are to conduct ourselves while we are here. We are able to understand where we are going. We know what is going to happen to human history. We know how it is all going to come out. That is utterly astounding to me, and I hope it is to you as well.

⁴ Revelation 1:3.

The Ancient Spiritual War—Part 1

Revelation 12:1-6

Now, the three characters in this background drama that we find here in the first six verses really serve as an outline for us today. We are going to see “the woman,” “the dragon” and “the son.”

First of all, “the woman.” Notice in verse one of chapter 12 we read, “A great sign appeared in heaven.”⁵ Great is *mega* (meg'-a) in Greek. It means huge, enormous, something that is vast which indicates that this is of profound importance. This great sign now takes center stage. What is it? The text tells us it is, “a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.”⁶

Now we all know that a sign is something that points to something else. It points to some thing. And here the sign is a woman. This is not a real woman, but one that symbolizes and points to a specific literal reality. This is a symbolic woman, a symbolic mother. It will become very obvious that this woman represents Israel—the woman and her male child whom the dragon seeks to destroy.

There are three other symbolic women in the book of Revelation, four in total. You will remember in chapter two and verse 20 there is the woman Jezebel, which was a pseudonym for a female false teacher in the church of Thyatira. And she symbolized the vile religious practices of paganism that had infiltrated that church. Also in chapter 17 we will read of “the woman clothed in purple and scarlet,” the “great harlot” which is emblematic of the ecumenical apostate religious system that will be at work during the time of the tribulation, working in concert with the antichrist. And then, also in chapter 19 there is yet another woman, “the bride of the lamb” symbolic of the bridal church. But here we have, “A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.”⁷

Now, as always, when we come to a passage of Scripture that is symbolic and difficult to understand we want to apply the proper rules of interpretation to understand what the Lord is telling us. And suffice it to say that the real key here is to use the Bible to interpret the Bible. You don't just come up with some quiver in your liver and say, “Well, here is what I think this means.”

The Holy Spirit used these very same symbols to describe Israel, for example, in Joseph's dream found in Genesis chapter 37. There in verse nine we read, “Behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me,”⁸ Joseph said. The text goes on to say that “he related it to his father and to his brothers and his father rebuked him and said to him, ‘What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?’”⁹ Now, in that passage the sun refers to Jacob, the father. And you will recall that Jacob wrestled with the angel of the Lord (who was the pre-incarnate Christ in Genesis 32), and you will recall that he

⁵ Revelation 12:1.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Genesis 37:9.

⁹ Genesis 37:10.

The Ancient Spiritual War—Part 1

Revelation 12:1-6

cried out for a blessing and the Lord gave that to him and the Lord changed his name from Jacob to “Israel.” Also in that passage the moon refers to Rachel, Jacob’s wife and Joseph’s mother, and the 11 stars refer to his brothers, a reference to the 12 tribes of Israel.

So here in Revelation 12 verse one the sun, moon and 12 stars that adorn the woman are emblematic of Israel and her exalted status. These symbols depict the brilliance of her glory and her high ranking position of all the people’s of the earth. Even today in her unbelief and in her apostasy and in her humiliation she is still a part of God’s plan. They are God’s chosen covenant people that he will one day reconcile to himself and exalt. We read in Deuteronomy seven verse six where God described them as, “A holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.”¹⁰

Now, notice also with this woman we read, “the moon is under her feet.” Now this may well represent Israel’s covenant relationship with God in that the feasts and the festivals and convocations of Israel and the monthly sacrifices that they offered on the first day of every month always revolved around the scheduling of the monthly cycles of the moon.

We read also that this woman had the crown of 12 stars upon her head. And this crown in the original language is the *stephanos* (stef’-an-os) crown which was the crown that they would give to a victor, the crown bestowed upon somebody who had overcome some great difficulty or won some great event in athletics, who had triumphed over great adversity. And, again, it is interesting that the story of Joseph pictures the difficult history of Israel that will one day end in triumph when they finally enjoy the fulfillment of God’s unilateral, unconditional, irreversible covenant that he made to them through Abraham in Genesis chapter 12.

Beloved, please do not be misled by those who would have you believe that God is finished with Israel, that because of Israel’s sin, the sin of the Jews, that God’s promises have now been given to a more worthy group of people, the Gentile church, and that Israel has been replaced by the Church. Beloved, God has emphatically stated otherwise over and over again in Scripture that he will never abandon his elect people Israel. Jeremiah chapter 31 verse 36 we read that, “The offspring of Israel also will cease From being a nation before Me forever.”¹¹ And in chapter 33 verse 25 he says, “Thus says the LORD, ‘If My covenant for day and night stand not, and the fixed patterns of heaven and earth I have not established, then I would reject the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, not taking from his descendants rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them.’”¹²

Dear friends, this will come to fruition at the end of the tribulation just as God has promised when, once again, he brings judgment upon his covenant people and he restores them unto himself in Daniel’s 70th week. Remember, Israel was the focus of the first 69 weeks. So, too, will they be the focus in the 70th. There is no reason to deny the normal

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 7:6.

¹¹ Jeremiah 31:36.

¹² Jeremiah 33:25.

The Ancient Spiritual War—Part 1

Revelation 12:1-6

meaning of language and impose some fanciful allegorical interpretation upon the prophetic literature. So here John sees the woman whom he would have immediately recognized to be Israel.

In verse two we read that, “She was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth.”¹³ Again, the Old Testament frequently uses the imagery of a woman travailing in labor to describe Israel’s condition as they long for the delivery of the Messiah and the birth of the kingdom, all the while bearing the pains of persecution brought on by Satan throughout their agonizing history. Like a mother travailing in labor, her pain, though severe, would never kill her, only torment her until the delivery occurs. And, of course, the pain would increase just before the actual birth, especially the birth of the kingdom.

Now, while the Messiah was born at his first coming, the fulness of his glory will not be birthed until his Second Coming when the kingdom itself will come forth and he ascends the earthly throne. Many Old Testament passages use this imagery of a woman travailing in labor. I will give you but a couple. In Micah chapter four verse 10 we read, “Writhe and labor to give birth, Daughter of Zion, Like a woman in childbirth.”¹⁴ And in chapter five verse three Micah describes in this text the interval between Messiah’s rejection and her return to the Lord. But during that time she will languish under Gentile domination and in that text we read:

Therefore He will give them up until the time
When she who is in labor has borne a child.
Then the remainder of His brethren
Will return to the sons of Israel.
And He will arise and shepherd His flock
In the strength of the LORD,
In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God.
And they will remain,
Because at that time He will be great
To the ends of the earth.¹⁵

Speaking there of the Lord’s return and the nation of Israel as they come into the millennial kingdom.

Next the Lord reveals to us through John’s vision a second actor, the great antagonist and mortal enemy of the woman who continues to writhe in pain. This is “the dragon,” number two, who according to verse nine represents, “The serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan.”¹⁶

Notice verse three. “Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems.”¹⁷

Biblically we know that Satan was described as a serpent that tempted Eve in the garden, Genesis 3:1, a *nachash* (naw-khawsh’) in Hebrew. But sometimes it is interesting that

¹³ Revelation 12:2.

¹⁴ Micah 4:10.

¹⁵ Micah 5:3-4.

¹⁶ Revelation 12:9.

¹⁷ Revelation 12:3.

The Ancient Spiritual War—Part 1

Revelation 12:1-6

the Hebrew word for dragon, which is *tanniyn* (tan-noon'), is also translated "serpent." *Tanniyn* (tan-noon') can be translated as a marine monster or even a land monster, a sea serpent or a dragon.

As a footnote, in Genesis 3:1 we read, "Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made,"¹⁸ referring to the devil. That particular creature would have more than likely resembled a dragon that stood up and walked on two legs, rather than a snake, because it was not until after he was cursed was he forced upon his belly to slither and to eat the dust. The Hebrew language gives us some idea of these things.

But here the imagery is very, very frightening. It is more than just a serpent. It is that of a dragon. Satan is symbolized by a dragon, a monster. And notice it says a great red dragon. Red in Greek is *pyrros* (poor-hros'). It could literally be translated a "flame colored" dragon. Dear friends, this the color of fire. This is the color of torment. This is the color of bloodshed which perfectly symbolizes Satan's violent character.

But also notice in verse three he has, "Seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems."¹⁹ Now we are going to study this in much greater detail in chapters 17 verses nine and 10, but we know from parallel passages in chapter 13 verse one as well as in Daniel chapter seven that this is a reference to a future world empire, probably a revived Roman Empire. And here, notice, is seven heads with their seven diadems, which would be royal crowns, that represent the seven consecutive Gentile world empires that Satan has raised up against the purposes and the people of God down through redemptive history. Six of them have already occurred in the past. There is one yet to come. They are Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and then finally during the time of the tribulation, the empire of the antichrist which will consist of a 10 nation confederacy, again, the revived Roman Empire of Daniel seven. Now the 10 horns here in verse three depict the 10 kings that will rule under the antichrist.

Now, if I can digress for a moment I hear people ask from time to time, "What about the Untied States?" Beloved, there is no mention of the United States in Scripture in Bible prophecy, and technically, the United States is an extension of the sixth kingdom, the Roman Empire, and will more than likely be a part of that 10 nation confederacy of the revived Roman Empire. Perhaps we will be absorbed into the European Union because certainly at the rapture of the Church the United States will become a mere shadow of itself.

And keep in mind: Our moral and economic foundations have been deteriorating for a number of years now. And they have gone into an absolute free fall in the last year at least, especially with the Marxist ideologies of the Obama administration that is pushing us further and further to the brink of collapse, and many believe deliberately so. This also helps explain why in the last half of Daniel's 70th week Israel has no ally to assist her in

¹⁸ Genesis 3:1.

¹⁹ Revelation 12:3.

The Ancient Spiritual War—Part 1

Revelation 12:1-6

fighting the pogrom of the antichrist. So the United States will be radically altered. We don't know to what extent, but certainly there is no mention of her in the prophetic Word.

Well, there is an important note we need to look at here. Notice there is a shift in the two phrases found here in verse three. We see “the diadems,” again, the royal crowns or kingly crowns of kingly rule, “the diadems” are transferred from “the seven heads” of the dragon and placed upon “the horns of the beast.” And we see this more in the passages to follow, the 10 kings under the rule of the antichrist. As we will discover, during the tribulation, all of the power of these consecutive world empires will eventually be transferred to the 10 kings under the one ruler of the antichrist.

Now in order to provide even further context to explain the dragon's violent animosity toward the woman and to reveal the army that he currently controls, the Lord takes us all the way back to Satan's fall. Notice in verse four, “And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven.”²⁰ The stars of heaven could be translated in the original language, “belonging to heaven.” “And threw them to the earth.”²¹ The stars here refer to angels as we learn in verses eight and nine. If we were to take time we could go back to Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel chapter 28 where we have a great description of Satan being thrown down from his exalted position in heaven. But here we learn that one third of the angels went with him.

Now it is always fun to muse about these types of things. I remember in seminary sometimes we would contemplate great spiritual truths (said sarcastically) like did Adam and Eve have navels, or, how many angels could dance on the head of a pin? and other profound matters. But one of the questions that we could come to here is: How many angels are there? How many demons are there if he swept away a third? Well, the answer is: We don't really know, but we do know, according to Revelation 5:10 that there are “myriads and myriads and thousands and thousands” of angels. So whatever a third of that would be. And we know that untold number of demons currently live on the earth according to Ephesians 6:12 that we read earlier and Colossians 2:15. And in Revelation nine verse one through three you will recall that there are untold numbers of demons that will be released from the abyss during the time of the tribulation. And in verse 16 of chapter nine we read that 200 million demons abound at the River Euphrates and they will be released. So it is fair to say that a third of the angels that aligned themselves with Satan would be in the hundreds of millions if not billions.

So Satan and a third of the angels are now cast down to the earth. And keep in mind, although currently Satan still has access to God where he spends part of his time trying to convince God of our unworthiness, we know that during the tribulation Michael will defeat him and he will be permanently barred from having any access to God.

Notice the next thing John sees in his prophetic vision here at the end of verse four. “And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave

²⁰ Revelation 12:4.

²¹ Ibid.

The Ancient Spiritual War—Part 1

Revelation 12:1-6

birth he might devour her child.”²² Certainly violent opposition to Christ and all who belong to him has always been Satan’s consuming passion. In John 8:44 Jesus said that Satan was a, quote, “Murderer from the beginning,”²³ and is, “The father of lies.”²⁴ All through Scripture we read of him deceiving and killing, all in an effort, again, to thwart the purposes of God to redeem his people and to restore his kingdom on earth.

You will recall in Genesis 3:14 that God cursed him and in verse 15 he says, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed.”²⁵ And then his ultimate defeat was predicted when “the seed of the woman,” namely Christ, would one day, quote, “bruise [him] on the head.”²⁶ In other words, deal to him the final and fatal blow.

But, dear friends, down through redemptive history the Word of God reveals to us this great war, this war between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light, Satan’s great war with God. It began in the garden when he came and he brought sin into the garden and tempted Adam and Eve. You will remember that it was Satan that influenced Cain to kill his brother Abel. We saw it when he instructed the demons to cohabit with women in Genesis six in an effort to create a mongrel race of human beings so demonized as to ultimately prevent the incarnation of the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ, the seed of the woman as well as make humans unredeemable. We saw it in his attempt to establish a one world empire at the building of the tower of Babel along with the counterfeit religious system that he established at that point that can still be seen in virtually every false religion of the world. We saw it when he tried to destroy the covenant people of God through the Egyptian Pharaohs and during the time of the conquest with the Philistines, the Canaanites and then with the Assyrians and the Babylonians and the Medes and the Persians and the Greeks and the Romans and countless enemies of Israel down through history. We witnessed it when he influenced Saul to kill David and to hopefully put an end to the messianic line. That failed so he raised up Absalom to finish the job.

Twice during the period of the divided kingdom the messianic line was kept alive by only one child due to Satan’s relentless efforts. You will remember the story of Satan’s little ape Haman (in the story of Esther) who almost succeeded in his genocidal plot to eradicate the Jewish people once and for all. Yet every time Satan attacked, our sovereign God intervened because, beloved, no man nor demon can stay his mighty arm.

But there can be no greater demonstration of the dragon who stands before the woman about to give birth so that when she gave birth he might devour her child, than the story of Herod who tried to kill all the male children in Bethlehem, you will recall, in Matthew chapter two; forcing Joseph and Mary to flee with the Christ child to Egypt. And even from the outset of Jesus’ earthly ministry Satan tempted the Lord in an effort to

²² Revelation 12:4.

²³ John 8:44.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Genesis 3:15.

²⁶ Ibid.

The Ancient Spiritual War—Part 1

Revelation 12:1-6

disqualify him as the spotless lamb and therefore prevent his triumph over Satan and sin and death at the cross. And then repeatedly Satan worked through the Jewish religious leaders to kill him and prevent him from going to the cross. And ever since his ascension, Satan has continued to eliminate the woman Israel and prevent the coming kingdom, not to mention to destroy the Church. So, beloved, from the Caesars of Rome to Hitler of Nazi Germany to Iran's Ahmadinejad and the whole Muslim world, the dragon never ceases in his effort to devour the child.

May I also remind you that Satan is a Bible scholar *par excel lance*. He is the master counterfeiter. He is an absolute genius in creating what appears to be real and truthful when, in fact, it is a lie. Luther once said, quote, "Diabolos est simia dei," . . . "The devil is God's ape." And during the tribulation in his efforts to destroy the woman and devour the male child, he will first endeavor to create a facsimile of the glorious millennial kingdom through his counterfeit peace. At that time the antichrist will be his counterfeit Christ. His nefarious plot will also include a counterfeit unholy trinity consisting of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. In his diabolical and blasphemous scheme he will also even counterfeit the bridal church that is to be pure and chaste, which will be an apostate ecumenical, ecclesiastical religious system led by the false prophet, the great whore, the great harlot of Revelation 17.

So the Lord has revealed to us "the woman," "the dragon" and then next and finally in his introductory overview, he makes a victorious statement here regarding, number three, "the Son." Verse five: "And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne."²⁷ And, of course, the male child is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. The word "rule" is important because in the original language it carries with it the idea of destruction. It is the idea of "destroying" and, indeed, the messianic kingdom, when the Lord returns will destroy all other kingdoms. His kingdom alone will dominate the world. His rod of justice is one of iron. It will not be broken.

The prophecy found in Psalm two beginning in verse eight helps us understand that. There we read the Word of the Lord:

I will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance, And the very ends of
the earth as Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron,
Thou shalt shatter them like earthenware.²⁸

When you come to verse five you have to get excited. This is such a verse of triumph, is it not? Think about it. Despite the dragon's attempts to prevent the woman Israel from bringing forth the male child, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, we see that he is born and that he is going to rule with a rod of iron. And, indeed, as the text says, "Her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne."²⁹ And we know that after his resurrection what happened? He ascended to the right hand of the Father. The male child is now

²⁷ Revelation 12:5.

²⁸ Psalm 2:8-9.

²⁹ Revelation 12:5.

The Ancient Spiritual War—Part 1

Revelation 12:1-6

beyond the reach of the dragon. However, I would hasten to add that that was not the purpose of the ascension, but rather an implication of it. So now today the dragon plots against his return. The dragon continues his efforts to destroy both the church as we endeavor to evangelize the lost and rip souls from his claws as well as to destroy Israel, who await the fulfillment of the covenantal promises that God made to Abraham as she awaits her Messiah.

This scene closes by describing Israel during the last half of the tribulation. Verse six. “Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.”³⁰ Keep in mind during the tribulation Satan will increase his efforts of Jewish genocide in an attempt to eliminate the Jews and therefore the possibility of the millennial kingdom, and were it not for divine intervention he would succeed. But here we learn that, once again, the God of Israel arises as the defender of his people. And we see here, as well as in other passages, that he will hide them and he will nourish them, notice, “For one thousand two hundred and sixty days.”³¹ That is three and a half years. That is “the time of Jacob’s trouble,” the last half of the tribulation just before he returns. He will hide them and he will nourish them in some undisclosed place in the wilderness. This is reminiscent of their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness where the Lord did the same thing.

Many Jews, according to Scripture, will remain in Jerusalem close to the temple even though it has been desecrated. They will try to survive. And many will be saved through the testimony of the “two witnesses” that will make their headquarters there in Jerusalem. Yet many will be slaughtered and many will have fled into this place of protection in the wilderness.

Of this day Jesus said in Luke 21:23:

Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles [and then I love the final phrase] until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.³²

And when the Lord returns, beloved, that will be the end of it all.

I wish to close this morning with Bishop J C Ryle’s comment on this coming reality, great pastor and theologian back in the 1800s. In fact, he wrote this in 1859, words that could have well been written today. Here is what he said, quote, “While the nations of Europe are absorbed in political conflicts and worldly business, the sands in their hourglass are ebbing away. While governments are disputing about secular things and parliaments can hardly condescend to find a place for religion in their discussions, their

³⁰ Revelation 12:6.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Luke 21:23-24.

The Ancient Spiritual War—Part 1

Revelation 12:1-6

days are numbered in the sight of God. Yet a few years and the times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled. Their day of visitation will be past and gone. Their misused privileges will be taken away. The judgments of God shall all on them. They will be cast aside as vessels in which God has no pleasure. Their dominion shall crumble away and their vaunted institutions shall fall to pieces. The Jews will be restored. The Lord Jesus will come again in power and great glory,” end quote.

What an amazing story, what an astounding reality that the Lord has written here and given to us in the book of Revelation. And, beloved, please hear me. The Lord has not gone to such great lengths to describe these future events just to satisfy our curiosity about the future. He has revealed these things to us that he might be glorified, that we, as his people would look at him and say, “Oh, our God reigns!”

Despite everything that is falling apart around us, we know that our God is sovereign over all things and he will accomplish his purposes that he has decreed in eternity past. And as we contemplate these things we are forced to our knees and say, “Oh, Lord, what a merciful, holy and sovereign God you are. You deserve all of me.”

Do you realize that there is no other religious document in the history of the world that includes prophecy? Do you know why? Because if you were to put prophecy in there and you are not God who can pull it off, you are going to be exposed, and you will be proven as a fraud, but not so the Bible. It is amazing to me. Do you realize that the Old Testament is filled with promises concerning a coming Messiah deliverer, 333 to be precise. And since more than 100 of those prophecies were fulfilled literally at the first advent of Christ, don't you think we can be confident that the rest are also going to be fulfilled literally?

Dear Christian friend, let these prophetic truths stir your hearts to new levels of worship and praise. Our God reigns. He is sovereign over all. And yet to realize as we study these things not only do we know what is going to happen, which, by the way, also gives us some perspective of the chaos that we see in our world today when we turn on the news, but beyond that, to be able to say, “Oh, Lord, you are full of mercy, you are full of grace for all who trust in Christ as their only hope of salvation.” Beloved, he is coming again. May these great truths motivate us all to love the Lord our God with that supreme love. And because of the mercies of God to present ourselves as living and holy sacrifices acceptable to God which is our spiritual service of worship.

Let's bow our heads together.

Father, we are exhilarated when we consider the glorious truth of your Word. Lord, may they stir our hearts afresh even today to be lost in the wonder of your glory and grace. Lord, may these truths cause us to transcend the temporal and to look into the eternal for therein is our home. Lord, stir our hearts, as well, to evangelism. May we be vigilant in our efforts to reach the lost with the truth.

The Ancient Spiritual War—Part 1

Revelation 12:1-6

And I finally pray, once again, Lord, for those that do not know you, oh, God, may today be the day that they are so overwhelmed with the reality of their sin and their need to be reconciled to a holy God that today will be the day that they fall on their face and cry out for the mercy that you alone can give. May today be the day that they experience the miracle of the new birth I pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Transcript Explanation: Each transcript is a rough approximation of the message preached and may occasionally misstate certain portions of the sermon and even misspell certain words. It should in no way be considered an edited document ready for print. Moreover, as in any transcription of the spoken word, the full intention and passion of the speaker cannot be fully captured and will in no way reflect the same style of a written document.

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that you do not alter the wording in any way and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. For web posting, a link to this document on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Olive Tree Resources.

Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By Dr. David Harrell. © Olive Tree Resources. Website: olivetreeresources.org