

BACK TO THE TRIBULATION PART 1

Scripture Reference: Revelation 12:1 – 12:17

Last session we saw the blasts of the seven trumpets unleashing God’s wrath upon the earth.

QUESTION?	From last session, when the blasts are complete, what is the earth’s condition?

We now come to **Revelation 12**. The “great sign” John sees in heaven indicates something new. Here we have a transition in the book of Revelation. So far, here is an outline of Revelation:

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| I. Revelation 1:1 – 1:8 | Introduction and Greetings |
| II. Revelation 1:9 – 1:20 | The Vision of Christ |
| III. Revelation 2:1 – 3:22 | Messages to the Seven Churches |
| IV. Revelation 4:1 – 5:14 | Events in the Throne room of Heaven |
| V. Revelation 6:1 – 8:6 | The Seven Seals are Opened |
| VI. Revelation 8:7 – 11:19 | The Blowing of the Seven Trumpets |

As we got to the prophetic elements of John’s revelation in chapter 4, we followed sequentially up through chapter 11 with the blowing of the seventh trumpet. Now we have this shift, not only in content, but also in time. What John sees now takes him back to the time of the *seals* where his revelation gives more information and details to the events during the traumatic seven year period that the Antichrist is bringing persecution to God’s people (Israel and the church).

So, let’s look at these “great signs” John now sees and let’s understand how they fit into the time of the seven seals. Read **Revelation 12:1-17**. In this passage, we see a great deal of symbolism – the woman, the Child, the dragon, and the Lamb. We know this passage is symbolic because John reveals the object symbolized by the “dragon” in verse 9 as that of Satan. So, let’s break down each symbol with the applicable Scripture.

- 1) *A woman.*

Who or what do you believe the “woman” represents? _____

Several clues as to her identity are given by John with his description of her being “*clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.*” The first two clues dealing with the sun and moon show an exalted position and status. So whoever this is, has an exalted status or position in God’s creation. The garland of twelve stars adds even more to this picture. The number twelve immediately points the reader to either the twelve tribes of Israel or the twelve disciples. Both Israel and the Church definitely have an exalted position in God’s creation being the “royal priesthood and holy nation.” (Read **Exodus 19:6**, **Deuteronomy 7:6**, and **1 Peter 2:9**) So to which one of these does this vision refer?

Additionally, her gender is a clue. Both Israel and the Church are both always referred to in the feminine gender. The Church is the “Bride of Christ” and Israel is always referred to as the “wife” whom God chastens for her “adultery” throughout the Old Testament. (see **Hosea 1:2**)

The final clue given of this woman is in her “*giving birth*”. Israel gave birth to the Messiah – Jesus. And, as a result, also gave birth to the church. Therefore, we can conclude with confidence (which will be even further supported as we go) that this *Woman* refers to none other than the nation of Israel.

2) *A great, fiery red dragon*

As already mentioned, John himself identifies this dragon to be none other than Satan (vs. 9). Some of the accompanying imagery adds to the understanding of this symbol.

- a) *Seven heads and ten horns, seven diadems on his heads.* We’ve see this imagery in previous studies from Daniel and Revelation with regards to the beast and the beast empires. Here the seven heads refers to the seven beast empires over which Satan has ruled and inflicted persecution, death, and slavery to God’s chosen people throughout history.

QUESTION?	From previous sessions, can you name the “beast empires”?

The ten horns refers to the eighth beast empire ruled by the Antichrist in the end. The seven “diadems” refer to crowns revealing that ultimately Satan himself ruled over these empires – although he always played right into the hands of God Himself.

- b) *His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to earth.* As we saw last session, often times a “star” can refer to an angel. Most hold that this is a reference to the fall of Satan in his rebellion against God. (Read **Ezekiel 26:11-19** and **Isaiah 14:12-15**) When God cast Satan out of his heavenly position, Satan took 1/3 of the angels with him. These are now referred to as “fallen angels” or “demons.”

- c) *The dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth...* John sees a glimpse into the spiritual war that raged at the advent of Christ’s first coming. As Mary (some hold she alone is the “woman” but following verses discount that possibility) prepares to give birth, Satan knows he must destroy God the Son.

- 3) *The Child.* Many translations have the word “Child” capitalized. This is always a reference to Jesus. Additional clues that alert us to the Child’s identity is the fact that this Child is “male.” Again, Israel and the Church are always referred to in the feminine. Of course, the most significant clues are that this “Child” will rule the nations with a “rod of iron” and “will be caught up to God and His throne.” There is very little to no debate that this “Child” is the Christ.

According to **Revelation 12:6**, what happens to the woman? _____

So the woman flees to a safe place provided to her by God Himself. This begs the question, “From what or whom is she fleeing?” The answer is she is fleeing the wrath of Satan, the pursuit of Satan against her. As we have already discussed, there will be no greater time of Satan’s persecution of Israel and the Church than in the tribulation period. (Recall the seals and **Matthew 24:9-15**)

According to John’s revelation, how long will this initial hiding take place? _____

From last week, we know that 1,260 days, according to the Hebrew lunar calendar is exactly 3 ½ years. This would be the first half of the “7-year tribulation” period. We know this because of some other passages that mirror this one. Read **Daniel 11:41-45**. Here we see the probable identity of the safe place God provides.

QUESTION?	From Daniel 11:41, what are the lands that will be safe for God’s people?

This passage outlines the rising power and dominance of the Antichrist as he defeats the “kings of the North and South.” This would be the first and second seals of **Revelation 6**.

QUESTION?	Can you recall what the First and Second Seals were?

Now read **Revelation 12:7-12**. Now we meet **MICHAEL**.

What do you know of Michael? _____

According to this passage, Michael, the leader of the army of angels, battles against the dragon – Satan. Satan and his fallen angels lose this fierce battle and are no longer have any place in heaven. As a result, Satan is cast upon the earth. According to verse 10, Satan will no longer be allowed in the throne room of God to accuse the “brethren” as he has done throughout history. (See **Job 1:6-7** and **Luke 22:31-32**)

John then hears this “loud voice” say, “*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.*” (vs. 12b) In other words, things are about to get really bad for God’s people.

Now, go back to **Daniel 12:1**. How does this passage mirror **Revelation 12**? _____

We see the timing sequence given by John in Revelation to be the same as that from Daniel almost 600 years earlier. Remarkable! But wait, there is more.

Go back to **Matthew 24:15-22**. According to Jesus there will be this event He claims is the “abomination of desolation” of which Daniel prophesied would take place in the “*middle of the week*” (Daniel 9:27). Following this would come what Jesus describes as the “*great tribulation.*” (**Matthew 24:21**)

Yet, there is one more passage shedding light on this period. Read **2 Thessalonians 1:5b-10, 2:1-12**. In Chapter 1, Paul sets up the context as “*that Day*” meaning *The Day of the LORD*. In Chapter 2, Paul defines what happens at the “*abomination of*

desolation” when he describes that the Antichrist or “*lawless one*” will “*sit as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*” (vs. 2:4).

In **2 Thessalonians 2:6-7** Paul makes an interesting statement. Paul introduces us to this one referred here as the “restrainer” or “one who restrains.” Though there are many ideas as to the identity of this *restrainer*, the most logical fit in light of the many Scriptures we have read and with the timing of this event is that the *restrainer* is none other than the angel *Michael*.

Throughout Scripture we see glimpses of Michael as one who fights on behalf of God’s people. With Satan cast to the earth, Michael and his army of angels do not buffet the wrath of Satan – so his wrath will be “great” according to **Revelation 12:12**.

QUESTION?	From this discussion, when does the abomination of desolation and Satan’s fall to earth take place?

This abomination, according to Daniel, and confirmed by John in Revelation takes place at the mid-point of the 7-year tribulation period. Now, we pick up with the sequence of events laid out by John in **Revelation 12:13-17**.

QUESTION?	According to this passage, what events take place next?

The following events transpire according to John’s revelation:

- 1) Satan pursues God’s people

- 2) God delivers His people into a safe place or “wilderness” for “*time, times, and half a time.*”
 - a. There are four words in Greek that are translated as “time” in English. They are:
 - i. *Aion* (from where we get “eon”) – This refers to an age or era of time.
 - ii. *Chronos* (from where we get chronology) – This refers to a sequence of time or ongoing time of the clock.
 - iii. *Hora* (from which we get “hour”) – This is a reference to the division of a day’s time or the time within a day.
 - iv. *Kairos* – No apparent English derivative. This refers to a distinct period of time – a fixed period.
 - b. This last word, *kairos*, is the word used here. The time John refers to is a very fixed amount of time. Most scholars, and the context of this passage as well as other supporting passages, confirm this “fixed time” to be a year.
 - c. With a year in mind, we see that...
 - i. *Time* = one fixed period or *1 year*
 - ii. *Times* = more than one fixed period or *2 years*
 - iii. *Half a time* = ½ fixed period or ½ year.
 - d. Thus, doing the math, we see that this refuge perfectly lasts 3 ½ years – the second half of the tribulation.
- 3) The Serpent (Satan) tries to flood the people of God, but God causes the earth to open and either naturally or supernaturally consume the flooding waters, thus protecting His people.
- 4) Satan is enraged at his failed attempt and makes war with Israel and the Church (*rest of her offspring who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*)

All of these events coincide with the third, fourth, and fifth seals of Revelation 6.

QUESTION?	Can you recall what the third, fourth, and fifth seals were?