

LECTURES ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION

By

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE WOMAN AND THE MAN-CHILD

(Lecture 12)

WE begin, with the present address, our study of a very distinct part of the Book, embracing chapters 12, 13 and 14, which form a connected outline of events.

The first two of these chapters, as noted on the chart, bring before us “the great actors for good and evil in the last days,” to use the very striking language of another; * while chapter fourteen gives us the consummation - the Lamb on Mount Zion, returned to bless the remnant of Israel, and through them the world, and the final judgments relating to the preparation for the actual setting up of the kingdom.

* Walter Scott.

NOTE: (*the chart is linked on the title page of this book, above the chapter links*).

I think I may say without exaggeration, that I have read or carefully examined several hundred books purporting to expound the Revelation. I have learned to look upon this twelfth chapter as the crucial test in regard to the correct prophetic outline. If the interpreters are wrong as to the woman and the man-child, it necessarily follows that they will be wrong as to many things connected with them. Therefore, I ask your particular attention as we endeavor to see what light Scripture itself throws upon this remarkable vision.

As indicated in the previous address, we should begin to read from verse 19 of chapter eleven, as this is the commencement of the third great division of the Book.

“And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.”

It may be well here to draw attention to the several “*openings*” in their order.

In chapter 4:1, we read, “**A door was opened in heaven,**” which introduces the third division of the Book, and shows us the saints in heaven around the throne of God and the judgments that follow the taking of the seven-sealed book.

In chapter 11:19 we have, “**The temple of God was opened in heaven,**” and there is seen in the temple the Ark of the Covenant, which at once calls to mind God’s covenant with His earthly people Israel, and shows us that though the lightnings, voices, thunderings, earthquake, and great hail that followed the opening of the temple, speak of fearful judgments to be poured out upon the prophetic earth, God will remember His covenant with Israel and preserve the remnant safely through it all.

In chapter 15:5, this thought is intensified in connection with the coming forth of the seven angels that have the seven last plagues. There we read, “**After that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened,**” and from that temple the seven angels went forth. The fact that the testimony is thus mentioned, again emphasizes God’s protecting care of His earthly people.

The fourth “*opening*” is in chapter 19:11.

“**And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat thereon was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war.**” The chapter goes on to describe, in highly symbolic form, the Lord’s appearing in open judgment.

These four openings are of deep significance and help greatly to an understanding of the Book.

- The first we have already considered.
- The second is to occupy us to-night and for several evenings.
- The third introduces the seven last plagues, in which is filled up the wrath of God.
- And the fourth ushers in the glorious millennial kingdom.

Now let us note carefully the vision of chapter 12:1-6. I read the first four verses:

“**And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: and she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.**”

“**And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.**”

It is a divinely given picture, in which God is throwing His own white light upon events which otherwise would be incomprehensible to His creatures.

A woman appears, arrayed with the sun, and the moon beneath her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. She cries out in anguish, travailing in birth, until she is delivered of a man-child. And this man-child is distinctly said to be the one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron.

The woman has a terrible, a most vindictive adversary - a great red dragon, who is described as having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads seven diadems, for it is well to notice that the word rendered “**crown**” in the Authorized Version is not the word we have already had before us in this Book - the crowns on the heads of the elders in heaven. Theirs was a victor’s wreath, but the dragon wears the imperial diadem. His is a reigning crown, for he is “**the prince of this world,**” acting, as we shall see shortly, through the Roman Empire. His tail, we are told, “**drew a third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them down to the earth.**”

John beheld him, in the vision, standing before the woman, waiting for her deliverance, that he might devour her child immediately upon its birth.

But he was thwarted in his malignant intentions, for the child was caught up unto God, and to His throne, and the woman, the mother, then fled into the wilderness, where God Himself had prepared a place for her, that she might be kept in security and nourished for a thousand two hundred and sixty days.

Now, first of all, who or what are we to understand this woman to represent? Many tell us she is the church. Others, and their number I notice of late is increasing, insist that she represents, rather, some system of teaching. Roman Catholic expositors have seen in her the Virgin Mary, and suppose the whole scene to depict her assumption into heaven, and her glory as its queen.

There have not been wanting individuals all down through the Christian era who have arrogated the vision to themselves, as for instance, Johanna Southcott, who gave herself out as the Bride of Christ, a century or so ago, and deceived many. Or in our own day, Mrs. Mary Baker Patterson Glover Eddy, who very modestly conceived and gave forth the thought that the woman was a highly symbolic picture of - herself! and the man-child represented that which she brought forth - Christian Science; whereas, the dragon was “mortal mind” endeavoring to destroy her new religion!

With such theories as these two, however, I need not take up the time of sane people.

The first view I mentioned is one that needs careful examination.

In doing this, let us first inquire who, or what, does the man-child symbolize? If we allow Scripture itself to answer, we find there is a person and a company of people answering to this description.

In the 2nd Psalm The Lord says to Messiah, “**Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel**” (vers. 7-9).

This, clearly enough, is our Lord Jesus Christ, who is soon to reign over all the earth, and undoubtedly He is primarily the Man-child who is to rule the nations with a rod of iron, and the special object of Satan's malignity. But we have already seen, in Revelation 2:26-28, that when He reigns He will not reign alone, for His promise to the faithful overcomers in the church period is, **"And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star."**

Is there then any incongruity in understanding the man-child to represent both Christ Jesus our Lord and His church? Surely not, for He is the Head of the body, the church, which is the fulness, or completion, of Himself, so that the title **"Christ"** is applied to both head and body viewed as one in I Corinthians 12:12, where we read, **"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ"**; literally it reads, **"the Christ."** We may then, on the authority of Scripture itself, safely affirm that the man-child represents the one New Man who is to rule the nations with a rod of iron - Christ, the Head, and the church, His body. If this be so, then it is impossible that the woman should symbolize the church.

But there are those who tell us, and their number is not few, that only the strong spiritual members of the church are designated in Scripture as overcomers, and that the woman pictures the church as a whole; whereas, the man-child symbolizes the overcoming part of the church who, they say, will be raptured prior to the great tribulation, while the rest of the church will be purified through that time of trouble.

But Scripture definitely determines the untruthfulness of this contention, for we are told distinctly, **"Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ? This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."**

An overcomer is one who has personal faith in Christ, and every believer in this sense overcomes. Those who do not are proven not to have real faith, and are simply professors, not possessors. This theory, to which I refer, denies the unity of the body of Christ; it fails to recognize the intimate relation existing between the head and all its members.

But who, then, is this star-crowned, sun-robed woman, who has the moon beneath her feet? First, let me ask, "Is there any other place in Scripture where we have the sun, moon and twelve stars brought together in a similar way?"

You will at once recall Joseph's dream. He beheld the sun, moon and eleven stars making obeisance to him. He himself was the twelfth star. His father rightly saw in this a picture of all Israel with its twelve tribes. And this was a hint worth considering. But, again, we are distinctly told concerning our Lord Jesus that it was of Israel **"as concerning the flesh that Christ came"** (Romans 9:5). And it is of Israel that Isaiah is singing when he exclaims, **"Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"** (Isaiah 9:6).

Israel is the mother of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came. The church did not give birth to Christ. He founded the church. He, as the last Adam, slept in death that the church might be taken from His wounded side. But He did come from Israel. Over and over again in the Old Testament that nation is depicted as being in travail-pain, waiting for His appearing.

Turn to Micah 5:2 and Isaiah 66:7, 8. By a comparison of these Scriptures with the one before us we see that **“before Israel travailed, she brought forth.”** That is, Christ Himself personally was actually born before the time of her great period of anguish in the days of the coming tribulation, but it will be during that time of trouble that He will be born in the consciousness of the nation, and that they will realize that He belongs to them,- that He is Israel’s Son. The twelve stars upon her head may well speak of her twelve patriarchs and her twelve tribes.

The moon beneath her feet speaks of the reflected glory of the Old Covenant, while the sun, in which she is enwrapped, tells of the New Covenant glory, in which she appears before God. At Christ’s actual birth, Satan put into operation the power of the Roman Empire through Herod, its puppet in Jerusalem, to seek His destruction. But He was preserved from Herod’s efforts, when the young children of Bethlehem were destroyed; and though crucified by a Roman Governor and by Roman authority, was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and caught up to God and to His throne.

Now I apprehend that in the vision before us this is in view; but there is more than that, for we have seen that the man-child symbolizes both Head and body - the complete Christ.

Therefore, as in other prophecies, the entire present dispensation is passed over in silence, and the church is represented in its Head, caught up with Christ. For immediately after this, Satan, again acting through the Roman Empire which is to be revived in the last days, turns upon the woman Israel and seeks to vent his wrath and indignation against her. But God prepares a place for her, and she is hidden in the wilderness - possibly the wilderness of the peoples, as Ezekiel (chap. 20:35) so graphically puts it. There she will be protected during the 1260 days, which, as we have already seen, appear to refer to the first half of the 70th week - **“the beginning of sorrows.”**

In the next section of the chapter, verses seven to twelve, our attention is turned from earth to heaven; it is a future great conflict, to occur in the heavenly places.

“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.”

A third actor in these stirring scenes is now introduced; it is Michael, the leader of the heavenly hosts.

But he is no stranger to the reverent student of the Word of God. We have already made his acquaintance in the Book of Daniel, and we know him as the great angelic prince, the archangel, who is particularly charged with the care of Daniel's people; and Daniel's people, we have seen, are symbolized by the woman whom we have been considering.

When our Lord Jesus Christ returns for His church, we are told that the voice of the archangel will be heard from heaven, together with the shout of the Lord and the trump of God. Michael's voice will awaken, or call together, all those of Israel who have died in the past dispensation, and who will have their part in the first resurrection.

Together with the church and the saints of previous ages, they will enter into the Father's house.

Their passage through the air and enthronement in glory would seem to be the signal for the driving out of Satan and his hosts from the upper air, where they have been permitted to maintain their hold during the past five thousand years. Satan is called the prince of the power of the air.

Believers are told that their conflict is with wicked spirits in heavenly places. These evil hosts are continually endeavoring, by deception, to keep Christians from enjoying their present portion in Christ, but when the church is caught up, they will be ignominiously driven from what we might call the "outer court of heaven" and cast down upon the earth. The great dragon, the energizing spirit of the old Roman Empire, and the one who is to be the energizing spirit of the same Empire when revived, is to be cast down, and in verse nine, that there may be no possibility of mistake, he is distinctly designated as **"the old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, the deceiver of the whole earth."**

When he and his accursed followers are hurled from the heavens, a voice of praise is heard above, celebrating the full salvation of God's redeemed, and the establishment in power of the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ, because of the fact that the accuser of our brethren has been cast down, who accused them before our God day and night.

This is no new thought; he appeared in this way in the days of Job, accusing that righteous man before the Lord; Zechariah also, in vision, beheld him accusing Joshua, the high priest. He has been permitted by God to act as the great prosecuting attorney, if I may so put it, at the High Court of the Universe, but no charge that he has ever been able to bring against those redeemed to God by the precious blood of Christ has ever stood, because that infinite sacrifice has fully availed to meet them all. Well may we sing:

"I hear the accuser roar
Of ills that I have done;
I know them all, and thousands more,
The Lord findeth none."

Or, as a verse of another beautiful hymn puts it:

“Though the restless foe accuses,
Sins recounting like a flood;
Every charge our God refuses -
Christ has answered with His blood.”

Christ is our advocate, and it is Satan’s malicious accusations that call for His constant advocacy on our behalf. As a result of this, the Holy Spirit applies to the hearts of the saints on earth the truth of God in divine power, practically cleansing their ways. And so it is said, **“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death”** (ver. 11).

Satan’s casting down will be the signal then for great rejoicing in the heavens, where the Old and New Testament saints will have been caught up; but it will be the signal also of great sorrow upon the earth, because the devil will have come down in great wrath, knowing that his time is short.

He has ever been the hater of all who belong to Christ, and will seek for any on earth who own His name in that day, utterly to destroy them. This is what is brought before us in verses 13-17:

“And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man-child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

The explanation is plain in view of what we have already had before us. The dragon will at once turn all his energies against Israel, but God has pledged Himself to preserve her through the great tribulation.

And so, we are told, there were given to the woman not merely two wings of a great eagle, but emphatically, the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, there to be nourished by God for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. That is, for the last three and a half years of the tribulation period. **“A time”** indicates a year; **“times,”** two years; and **“half a time,”** six months. This is the same as the forty-two months of the previous chapter. As to the expression **“the two wings of the great eagle,”** God says in regard to Israel, **“I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto Myself.”** He who delivered them from Egypt and cared for them in the wilderness will, in that coming day, deliver them from the wrath of the dragon and protect them in the wilderness of the peoples, from which they will afterwards come up in great numbers to dwell in their own land.

In vain the serpent casts out of his mouth water as of a great river, hoping that he might cause her to be carried away by the stream.

He would seek to ruin her by that which comes forth from his mouth-evil teachings, I take it, in contrast to the water of life given by our Lord Jesus Christ.

We may get the idea of this if we recall the fact that to-day myriads of Jews are being carried away by that Satanic flood from the mouth of the dragon known as Christian Science. So, in the days of the great tribulation, Satan will try to swamp and destroy Israel as a nation by the evil teachings he will spread through the world.

But even the earth itself will help the woman, opening her mouth and swallowing up the river which the dragon casts out. That is, driven out among all the nations, as I take it, Israel will be so shocked and horrified by the evil results of these Satanic teachings that they will themselves be preserved from them.

Just as of old a sojourn in Babylon, the fountain-head of idolatry, cured Judah, for the time being, of her own idolatrous tendencies, so Israel's experiences among the Gentiles in the last days will be used of God to preserve her from the evil river in which the dragon would drown her.

Unable to destroy the nation as such, he makes a special effort to ruin the rest of her seed, or the remnant that keep the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus. These, I take it, are those who remain in the land, as pictured by the two witnesses, and there maintain a testimony for God against all the persecutions of the Antichrist.

How the devil will seek to destroy these the next chapter will tell us.

~ end of chapter 13 ~

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