

The War of the Ages, Part 3

Scripture: Revelation 12:13-17

Code: 66-43

And we are so privileged again tonight to go back to the book of Revelation. What an exciting and wonderful study of God's prophetic truth we're having. Revelation chapter 12 tonight, and we're going to be looking at verses 13 to 17, this the last section of this great twelfth chapter.

This is part three in our study of the war of the ages. Let me remind you of this text by reading it, beginning in verse 13, "And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. And the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman in order that she might fly into the wilderness to her place where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time from the presence of the serpent. And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. And the dragon was enraged with the woman and went off to make war with the rest of her offspring who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus."

Now as we have been learning in our study of chapter 12, the nation Israel has suffered severely though the ages. In fact, this is not at all isolated to this part of the book of Revelation but is found in many, many parts of the Scripture, both in the Old Testament historical passages, and in Old and New Testament prophetic passages as well. And even in the gospel record of the New Testament in the book of Acts we see the overtones of the terrible persecution against the Jews that was indulged in by the Romans. And though they maintained a certain amount of kindness toward the Jews, there was inherent hostility going both directions. The story of Israel is a story of historical hostility and occupation, punishment, judgment, death. And that's going to be the case throughout all of time until the Lord Jesus comes back to establish His kingdom.

Here we are in the twelfth chapter of Revelation, looking ahead at a time known as the Tribulation, or the Great Tribulation. And during that time we're going to see and have already seen the nation of Israel suffering its most severe time of trial.

Now some of the suffering that Israel has undergone and will undergo is at the hand of Almighty God. God Himself who promised in the very beginning that if they disobeyed Him and did not follow Him and did not obey His Word, they would be punished, has made good His promise and has punished them through the ages.

The purpose of God is always remedial. The purpose of God in chastening the nation Israel is always with a view to bringing them to repentance and salvation. We could call it the judgment of love. Israel has also suffered, however, on the other hand, constantly and severely at the hands of Satan. His purpose is not remedial, his purpose is destructive...to bring them not to repentance and salvation but to bring them to death and hell. And this is the violence and the wrath of the judgment of hatred. And so this people, this unique people, the Jews, have been hit from two sides, the two most formidable powers in the universe, that of Almighty God and Satan himself. Through the centuries they have suffered in these two ways. And yet, as bad it has been, the worse is yet to come. In Jeremiah chapter 30 verse 7 speaks of a time in the future called "The time of Jacob's trouble." Jesus in Matthew chapter 24 said, "It will be a time of trouble, a time of tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall." It will be the worst of times. Why? Because God's final fury will be poured out on the world and on unrepentant and unbelieving Jews who will be destroyed in hell. And Satan's final fury will be poured out on those who believe in Jesus Christ and particularly on the nation Israel who will be slaughtered under his power.

The great persecution is yet to come. The great judgment by God is yet to come. And while the Jews would certainly be hoping against hope that the worst is in the past, it isn't. I thought of that this May as I wandered through the holocaust museum, Yad Veshim(??) in Jerusalem and saw all the memories that they have managed to incarcerate, as it were, in that facility for everyone to see, to remember the horrors of the holocaust so that, they tell you, it will never happen again. But it will. And far worse. As I said, God has judged His people for their disobedience but always with a view toward bringing them to repentance.

But on the other hand, the great persecution of Israel in the future will be led by the architect of all anti-semitism and that is Satan himself. The holocaust to come in the time of Tribulation will surpass all other persecutions of the Jews combined as the whole hosts of demons overrun the earth and aid in Satan's destructive efforts. In fact, it is really Satan's final attempt to abort the promised reign of Jesus Christ, the promised salvation of Israel and the promised kingdom.

During the time of the Tribulation, Satan will go after the Jews as a nation. He will certainly go after believing Jews who have come to Christ and all the other Jews who might come to Christ during that period of time, as he attempts to bring a screeching halt to the plan of God for that nation and for the world through them. He will do all he can to stop the ministry of the hundred and forty-four thousand but will be unsuccessful in stopping them because they will be sealed and protected from the death that he would want to impose upon them as they preach the gospel during the time of the Tribulation. He will certainly want to do everything he can by his demonic powers to thwart the flying angel who is flying through heaven preaching the gospel, but he will be unsuccessful in stopping him. He will want to do everything he can to silence the two witnesses of Revelation 11, and you remember that he will not be able to do that until the proper and appropriate time has come. And when he does succeed in

killing them, they will rise from the dead in just a matter of three days. He will attempt to slaughter on a wholesale level the nation of Israel. He will be unsuccessful in doing that and the worst dream of Satan will come true, that which is promised in Zechariah's prophecy, the Jewish nation will look on the one whom they have pierced, they will mourn for Him as an only son, a fountain of blessing and cleansing will be opened to them and they will be saved and their kingdom will come.

God certainly has allowed Satan to be effective in his persecution. And He has allowed Satan to kill many Jews and even many believers through the ages. And God will allow that in the time of Tribulation because it does accomplish God's own purging purpose. You remember the prophet of old said that God will purge out two thirds of those in Israel who will not believe. But Satan wants them all and God will not let that happen. He will preserve the remnant so that they can go into the kingdom alive.

The prophet Daniel saw this coming and it's worth our time to spend a moment in Daniel 12 because it's very, very essential to understand that the Jews have had the promise of protection in the end, as well as the promise of judgment and slaughter. In Daniel 12:1, "Now at that time Michael the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people will arise, there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time, and that time your people everyone who is found written in the book will be...what?...rescued." Yes there will be a purging, and two out of three of the rebels will be purged, but those who are the elect among the Israelites whose names are found written in the book will be rescued. God will save them from the slaughter of Satan to take them into His kingdom. Others who have died, verse 2 says, will arise and awake to everlasting life. And then he even goes on to talk about matters regarding the kingdom.

Look at verse 7 for just a moment of Daniel 12. Daniel is having a vision. He sees two individuals standing on the bank of the river, one on each side. And one said to the man dressed in linen who was above the waters of the river...how long will it be until the end of these wonders? And I heard the man dressed in line who was above the waters of the river as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven and swore by Him who lives forever, that it would be for a time, times and half a time. There's the exact same designation we just read in Revelation 12. That's that three and a half year time. And as soon as they finish shattered the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed.

So there is definitely going to be a shattering of the power of the holy people, an onslaught against God's people Israel, and I believe that encompasses other believing people who are the children of Abraham by faith. As soon as that slaughtering is done, during a time, times and half a time, then all the other events, namely the bringing in the kingdom, will be completed.

Down in verse 10, "Many will be purged, purified, and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand and from the time that

the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be twelve hundred and ninety days." He adds thirty days to the three and a half years which probably is associated with a mopping up time.

Now what that tells us is there's coming a terrible purging from God's viewpoint, a refining and a purifying of His people. The pure will be protected, the wicked who act wickedly will be judged. It's all going to start at the abomination of desolation which is at the midpoint of the Tribulation and it's going to go on for three and a half years, this onslaught against the holy people, breaking and shattering their power. And all the while that God allows that purging to be done by Satan, at the same time He will protect the elect of Israel and even raise those martyrs who have been killed who are among the elect to enjoy the eternal life that they have been given.

So Daniel looked and saw essentially the very same scenario that John is now seeing back in Revelation 12. And you can return to that text. Satan then is going after Israel. He will be thrown out of heaven, as we saw in our last study, and he will be thrown down to the earth. And I suggested to you that that probably begins, at least in my mind, I think it's most reasonable to assume it begins at the beginning of the time of the Tribulation. And while the full-blown hostility doesn't start until the midpoint, the first half of the Tribulation, Satan is beginning to set up His power base through Antichrist. You remember that he signs a pact for a seven-year period, Daniel 9 says. He starts to move into the place of political authority which gives him the position to do what he does at the midpoint. And then to take over his power throughout the earth. Satan wants to be aided in the world by a human force, he needs then a commander of all the forces of the world, he needs a world ruler, and it's going to take him a little time to set it up.

So I believe the first thing he does along with his demons when he hits the earth is begin to establish the power base of Antichrist. Brings along the false prophet, the proliferation of demons, not only those that have been cast out of heaven but those that have been belched up out of the pit and those that have been loosed from the river Euphrates namely two hundred million more, all really begin the major strike at the midpoint and after. And the goal of Satan is to destroy Israel and to abort the kingdom and to stop the reign of Jesus Christ. But he will not succeed because God will protect His chosen people, His elect.

I can't resist just going back, for a moment, to Hosea chapter 2 because I want you to see that this is something that again was given by the prophets of old. In Hosea 2, just to pick it up at verse 14, "Therefore, behold I will allure her, bring her into the wilderness and speak kindly to her, I will give her her vineyards from there and the valley of Achor is a door of hope, she will sing there as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt. It will come about in that day, declares the Lord, that you will call Me Ishi...that's my husband...and no longer Baali, or Baal, for I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth so that they will be mentioned by their names no more. In that day I will also make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds of the sky

and the creeping things of the ground, I will abolish the bow, the sword and war from the land. I will make them lie down in safety, I will betroth you to Me forever. I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in loving kindness and compassion. I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, then you will know the Lord."

What he's promising them is salvation and the conditions of the kingdom. "And it will come about...verse 21 says...in that day that I will responde, declares the Lord, I will respond to the heavens and they will respond to the earth and the earth will respond to the grain, to the new wine and to the oil and they will respond to Jezreel. And I will sow her for Myself in the land, I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion. I will say to those who were not My people, you are My people, and they will say, You are my God."

Hosea says there's a day coming when I will save you. And not only will I save you but I will take you into the kingdom. And it will be a kingdom on the earth, grain and oil and wine, all of those kinds of things that exist in the world. This indicates a salvation and a preservation of the nation Israel. Satan then is not going to be successful.

Now I've already told you how it's going to end, but let's go back and look at the battle anyway. In this text three attacks are given. Satan has a first attack, a second attack and a third attack. Let's look at attack number one.

We are now in the time of Tribulation. We've already been there in chapter 6 through 11, only we viewed it from God's side. Now we're in that same period viewing it from Satan's side. Verse 13, "And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child."

Now this is attack number one. When the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, we already studied that in verses 7 to 9, Michael and his angels, you remember, waged war and the dragon and his angels waged war, actually the indication is that the dragon and his angels started it. They were not strong enough. There was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down. And the end of verse 9, "And his angels were thrown down with him." And, of course, they came down to the earth. Thrown down, it says, in verse 9, to the earth.

I suggested to you that it's very possible that that battle could have been initiated by the Rapture, as saints are moving up into glory and Satan and his hosts try to stop them, Michael and the angels come to their rescue and the net effect on Satan is he is thrown down to the earth and he's out of the sky for good and no longer will he be the prince of the power of the air.

Now he is thrown down to earth and he has some seven-year period or whatever amount of period, certainly by the midpoint he's here in full fury, I would assume he's been here before and probably is

here for the full seven years. Although we need not be dogmatic about that. But he's down here and he has a period of years to unleash his final strategy. It does involve setting up a human leader so that he can get the human armies and the human forces that he needs to do the human killing that he wants done. He enters into a covenant with Israel, this individual, and that's why I believe Satan probably comes down right at the beginning so that he can move into the life of this individual and have him do what he wants him to do, namely that covenant of Daniel 9. That sets up everything for the holocaust that unfolds most significantly in the middle.

However, mark it in your mind that persecution will begin before the midpoint, because we find in chapter 6 verses 9 to 11 that in the opening of the seals, before we've even reached the midpoint, there are already souls who have been slain in the past and they're under the altar. They have been slain for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. And you will note, by the way, that in verse 17 of chapter 12, those are the very people that Satan is making war against, those who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus.

So it seems that the persecution begins before the midpoint. The midpoint is when it focuses on Israel. Up to that point there's a treaty between Antichrist and Israel, and that's when the full-blown persecution really starts. But first of all, when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to earth, what does it say? He persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. And we told you in our first study back in verses 1, 2 and 5 that the woman is Israel and the male child is Christ, the Messiah, the One who will rule all the nations with a rod of iron, that being the Lord Jesus Christ, verse 5.

So Satan eventually concentrates on Israel. Now verse 13 says he persecuted. The Greek verb means to pursue, to chase, or to hunt. The idea here implies hostile forces which is the usual usage of this verb in the New Testament. And we will find more details about that hostility over in chapter 13, just to mention them briefly to you. It says that the dragon, verse 4, works his agenda through the beast who is the Antichrist, and it says in verse 7 that he makes war with the saints, he's able to overcome them and get authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. And we'll see more about that in the future.

But he goes after Israel. He pursues them to the death. Now Jesus Himself warned them about, I think, this first wave of attack back in Matthew 24. I can remind you of...I know a familiar text, remember this, verse 15, "When the abomination of desolations spoken of by Daniel the prophet happens, the immediate response...verse 16...Let those in Judea...what?...flee." Why? Because he is going to chase you. Let them flee to the mountains, don't even go down into your house if you're up on the roof to get the things that are there. And if you're out in the field, don't go back to get your cloak. And if you have babies you're trying to nurse, woe to you and pray that your flight's not in the winter or on the Sabbath, because there is coming a Great Tribulation.

It's going to be so great that it's never been so in the history of the world, and if the days weren't cut short, nobody would survive. But for the sake of the elect, and I believe that has reference to the elect Israel as well as other believers from the Gentile nations, but certainly significantly refers to Israel. If it weren't for your sake...if it weren't rather for God's sake cutting it short, even the elect would be devastated.

And so he says you've got to run because he's going to come after you. One of the ways Satan is going to try to woo these people back out of their security is false christs and false prophets and false signs and false wonders. He's going to try to lure these people back, believing that the Messiah is here, the Messiah has arrived. Don't be fooled, Jesus said.

Mark 13 also speaks of the very same event. We won't take the time to read it, it's similar text. Mark 13 verses 14 through 23. Some people think Luke 21:20 to 24 is referring to the same event, but it isn't, it's referring to the destruction of Jerusalem, that's Luke 21:20 to 24 in case you want to compare that. But the destruction of Jerusalem uses some of the same terminology because it was a little bit of a foretaste of the horrible holocaust in the future. The massacre, by the way, in 70 A.D., the destruction of Jerusalem, took the lives of one point one million Jews. Now without modern warfare, to slaughter a million one hundred thousand Jews with hand weapons is some kind of massacre.

So Israel's situation is going to be terrifying. It's going to be tragic. And they need to run because verse 12 says Satan is going to start to pursue. He's thrown down to the earth, and he goes after the woman. Again, as I said, it could be that he's not thrown down till the midpoint, but it seems to me he may have been around setting up this strategy before, we can't be certain. But he goes after Israel. Why? To destroy the purposes of God, the plan of God for the nation Israel, the salvation of that nation.

Now I believe that in this fleeing...in this fleeing and this chasing by Satan there are going to be some people who help the Jews. Look back at Matthew 25 for a moment, or just listen, I'll read it to you. Do you remember in the Matthew 25 section of the Olivet Discourse, Jesus' message on His Second Coming? He talks about the judgment of the sheep and the goats, remember that? And it's very interesting what He says. He says, we can start in verse 31, "Son of Man when He comes in glory, all the angels with Him, He's going to sit on His throne." There's going to be a judgment when He arrives. And all the nations are going to be gathered before Him and He'll separate them one from another, as the sheep are separated from the goats. He puts the sheep on His right and the goats on the left. The sheep represent the saved, the elect, the believing. The goats represent the unbelieving. The king will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you are blessed of My Father, enter the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." You're the chosen. You're the redeemed. You're the saved. Not just Jews, but all who are saved and who are still around at that time.

Why are you saved? I was hungry you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty you gave Me drink, I was a stranger you invited Me in. This is the judgment of the nations. And these are particularly sheep out of the Gentile world. And He is saying to them, the reason you are going into My kingdom along with My elect nation, along with believing Jews who also will go into the kingdom and in a sense are His sheep, but He's directing this judgment toward nations, Gentile nations. The reason you're going in, He says, I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited Me in, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me. I was in prison and you came to Me.

And they're going to say...When did we do that? And He's going to say, in verse 40, "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it unto one of these My brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me." You know what I believe this points out? Gentile nations are going to come to the aid of Israel. And in that end time as the elect of God, the elect nation and also some of the elect Gentiles, of course, who will be mingled, as it were, among the believing Jews are going to become objects of protection by Gentiles who also will believe. I believe they demonstrate that they too have come to faith in Christ by the way they treat those who are being persecuted by Satan. Then He'll say in verse 41, "To the ones on the left, depart from Me, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels, because I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink..." In other words, you were on the side of the persecuting force, right? So everybody is going to wind up on one side. And the people who identify with the persecuted are going to identify with them at the cost of their life and they're going to be the ones who are saved, they're the ones who believe, they're the ones who confess Christ and they're the ones who will receive the kingdom.

So, in this pursuit as the Jews flee for their lives and as he...that is the Antichrist and the false prophet operating under the power of the dragon...go out to try to slaughter them all, they're going to be helped, that is to say, the fleeing believers are going to be helped by the nations, people out of the world. And I don't think it's a national kind of judgment, we say the nations, it means individual Gentiles...those who help Israel, those who help the believing remnant are going to give evidence by that help that they identify with them and therefore have believed in Christ. Those who don't will give evidence that they have identified with the enemy.

So there's going to be some assistance, but that's not all. Now go back to Revelation chapter 12. There's going to be more than just that. It says in verse 14 that God is going to come to their aid and the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman in order that she might fly into the wilderness to her place where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time from the presence of the serpent.

Now this is figurative language but it has the idea of rescue, or escape. The imagery is actually taken from Exodus chapter 19 verse 4, "You yourselves have seen...says the Lord...what I did to the

Egyptians...He's talking to Moses here...and how I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you to Myself." The eagle's wings then become a metaphor for God delivering His people, allowing them to escape a pursuing, killing, threatening force. You remember the whole force of the Egyptian army under the leadership of Pharaoh was coming after Israel and God say I picked you up, as on the wings of an eagle and flew you to safety. Wings in Scripture speak of strength, they speak of speed, but mostly, they even speak of protection, such as the hovering wings, but mostly they speak of a flight to safety.

Another Old Testament passage that perhaps we can comment on is Deuteronomy 32 verse 9, "For the Lord's portion is His people, Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance, He found him in a desert land and in the howling waste of a wilderness, He encircled him, He cared for him, He guarded him as the pupil of His eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that hovers over its young, He spreads His wings and caught them, He carried them on His pinions. He made him ride on the high places of the earth." Here again is that magnificent imagery of an eagle involved in the protection and the care of the people of Israel.

And then all of us, certainly, who have read the Psalms have a special love for that magnificent ninety-first psalm, "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust." And verse 4, "He will cover you with His pinions and under His wings you may seek refuge." Again the great protective care that God gives and a sense of safety because the same God who can cover us with His wings can put us on His wings and fly us to safety.

The great eagle, of course, is the largest bird known to them. These birds flew the highest and they flew the fastest. Isaiah comments about that, doesn't he, in chapter 40 verse 31 where he talks about mounting up as eagles.

The term "eagle" actually is probably making reference not to what we know as a bald eagle or an American eagle but to a bird in ancient times was called griffin. A griffin was a huge bird, a type of vulture, actually, that was four feet long and had a ten-foot wing span. That was the grand and great imagery of the eagle who would come and take them away. The Lord then is not only going to deliver them by the protection of believing Gentiles, but the Lord Himself is going to provide some way of escape.

What does it mean? I don't know. Does it mean some kind of an airlift? I don't know. Does it mean El Al is going to fly them all away into the desert? I don't know. It is an actual bird? No. The language is picturesque, but it is not a literal bird. Somehow God is not only from the help and care and sympathy and understanding and faith that comes from the Gentile nations, but somehow miraculously and divinely and explicably God is going to step in and fly them away, it says. It says, "In order that she might fly into the wilderness to her place." Remember back in verse 6 it said the

woman fled into the wilderness? Now we know why, because Satan was chasing and she fled into a wilderness where she had a place prepared by God. And she was to be there a thousand two hundred and sixty days, that's the last half. The heat comes at the midpoint. The Jews start to flee, they run for the wilderness. They are helped during that three and a half year period by believing Gentiles who come to faith but God Himself also comes to their rescue.

Now you say, "Well where is their place? Where is it that God hides them?" Well we don't know for certain. There's an interesting statement, however, in Daniel 11:41, I don't want to reveal in public their hiding place, but it may be that we know it. Daniel 11:41, talking here about the time of the great final war during the Tribulation, it says, "He will enter the beautiful land," that's Israel, "many countries will fall." Now this is under the tremendous power of the king of the north. But, verse 41, "These will be rescued out of his hand, Edom, Moab and the four most of the sons of Ammon." Why would God spare Edom, Moab and Ammon? Those countries, those are the ancient names of the countries directly across the Jordan Valley east of Israel. Could it be because they were the place where the Jews were protected? Wouldn't that be a wonderful twist if the Arab nations became the protectors of believing Israel and therefore maybe themselves came to the knowledge of God in Christ? Who knows?

But anyway, back to Revelation 12. We're not sure where the place is, could be a place like that. Some people think it's the rose-red city of the dead called Petra. In fact, I have read that some people have stashed Bibles in the caves there for the Jews when they get there. Maybe a bit presumptuous, but it is interesting. That's a city in Edom that is encased in rocks and the entrance to it is only the width of a man, and yet it's a whole civilization in there, they carved it all out of the rock. It's a magnificent place.

You say, "Well won't Satan know where they are?" Well he'll know where they are, he can get a helicopter and have the Antichrist send his guys over and look down on them, but it won't matter. He won't be able to do anything. They're going to have a place and in that place they're going to be protected by God.

The term "wilderness" generally referred to land east of Jerusalem as well.

Now notice what's going to happen. It says she's going to fly into the wilderness to her place where she was nourished. That literally means fed. Now you've got this remnant of believing Jews, those who have come to Christ and perhaps those who have not yet but will come to Christ, we're not sure how all this breaks out, but God is going to protect those who are His own. And I think compared with Daniel it seems to me that He's going to protect the elect. He may be in the process of protecting a least a portion of the elect before they've even become believers. Part of that coming to faith may be occurring out in this wilderness place. But they will be coming to the knowledge of their Lord and Messiah throughout the whole seven-year period under the influence of all those who have been

preaching.

So the Lord takes them out there and when He gets them out there, they're cut off from the whole world system. They've got a problem. How they going to live? How they going to survive? How are they going to eat?

Down in chapter 13 verse 17 it says if you don't have the mark of the beast of the number of his name, you won't be able to buy or sell. You can't get any supplies, you can't get any resources. You can't get any food. What's going to happen? How about manna? How about quail? He did it before, He could do it again, right? Who knows what God will do, we don't. But there have been miraculous judgments, why not miraculous provisions? This is going to last for a time and times and half a time. You've got to know that this is going to be one frustrating deal for Satan. He knows they're there and he can't get to them.

By the way, I think Daniel also spoke of this time in chapter 7 verse 25. You can go back and read that. Notice at the end of verse 14, just to note. When the Lord does spare them He spares them from the presence of the serpent. That's the point I made earlier. Satan can't get to them. They're out there. They're in their place. God is nourishing them for this three and a half year period and probably more and more are fleeing there all the time as they come to faith, and they're running from Antichrist. And some who haven't yet come to faith are running with them because he wants to kill all the Jews. And then there are Gentiles helping and assisting them in the flight. No doubt they'll be coming from all over the world and maybe that's part of how God uses airplanes to airlift them like a great eagle, who knows? But He's going to protect them. And Satan can't get near them.

Now that leads to attack number two, verse 15. "And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood." Apparently Satan is so thwarted in his initial attempt and he can't get to this great multitude of elect that are in the place God has for them, he can't get to them so he has to resort to long-range war tactics. He himself can't get there...whether it's Michael and his hosts preventing it, or whatever, he can't get there. So he's got to operate through some long-range tactic. So the serpent then poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman.

Now that imagery is quite interesting...it's quite interesting. It is not uncommon for those great animals who live in water to draw water in and then blow it back out of their mouths. If you remember the crocodile, the alligator, they will do the same thing, take in water and blow it out and so does a great whale in the sea, ingesting a tremendous amount of water and spraying it back out. The serpent is cast in that same imagery as some monster who is blowing out this...this great river of water out of his mouth, pouring it out.

Again that imagery is not uncommon in the Old Testament. Jeremiah maybe has a couple of notes that will give you a point of reference. Jeremiah 46:8 talks about Egypt rising like the Nile, like the rivers whose waters surge about. And you know what happened. The Nile would rise up just exactly the Mississippi is doing right now, only the Nile would do it every year and just drown everybody. And then in chapter 47 of Jeremiah verse 2, he says that the waters are going to rise from the north and become an overflowing torrent, overflow the land and all its fullness. In other words, judgment has come, disaster has come like a flood. That's the imagery of that language. This could be and most likely does refer to some kind of army. Again in Daniel 11, and I know we're jumping around, but you've got to deal with these texts. Daniel 11 verse 26 speaks of an army that overflows with destruction, that just floods the land. The dragon is figurative, and the serpent is figurative, so we assume the mouth is figurative and therefore if the mouth is figurative it's possible that the river is figurative. That's possible.

Some great force comes like a flood, attacking the people of God in the place where they are being protected. This is attack number two. Verse 15 says they come after the woman and they want her to be swept away with the flood. Literally they want her to be drowned, that's what the word means, to be immersed in a flood and carried away by it. They want her to be completely consumed and destroyed. That's the goal of Satan.

Listen to Psalm 124, "Had it not been the Lord who was on our side, let Israel now say, had it not been the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us alive when their anger was kindled against us, then the waters would have engulfed us, the stream would have swept over our soul, the raging waters would have swept over our soul." There's that same imagery. Seeing the force of the enemy like some kind of drowning flood. Similarly in Isaiah 59 verse 19, talks about those who fear the Lord, and the name of the Lord and His glory from the rising of the sun and He will come like a rushing stream. So force and power is associated with the movement of those kinds of waters.

What this tells us is that the frustrated dragon/devil is going to put together a force of men and demons to come after the people of God. But look what happens in verse 16. "And the earth helped the woman. And the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth."

What is this? Well, I'm not sure what this is either, except it's the end of this army, the end of this host. It's reminiscent, isn't it, of Exodus 15. What happened to the army of Pharaoh? They were drowned, the water swallowed them up. It's also reminiscent of another most interesting passage, Numbers chapter 16, maybe this is as close a parallel as we can find. This is about Korah, Dathan and Abiram who had been behaving wickedly, as you know. And in verse 28 Moses said, "By this you shall know that the Lord has sent me to do all these deeds for this is not my doing. If these men die the death of all men, or if they suffer the fate of all men, then the Lord has not sent me. If these

guys can do this and have no consequence, then I'm not from the Lord. But if the Lord brings about an entirely new thing and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that is theirs, and they descend alive into Sheol, then you will understand that these men have spurned the Lord. Then it came about as he finished speaking all these words, the ground that was under them split opened...major earthquake...and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up and their households and all the men who belonged to Korah with their possessions. So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol and the earth closed over them and they perished from the midst of the assembly. And all Israel who around them fled at the outcry, for they said the earth may swallow us up."

I don't know what's going to happen, maybe well could describe a similar situation, where the earth just opens up and this whole army is plunged into death instantaneously. Now that could fit. After all, what common phenomena goes on repeatedly during the time of the Tribulation?

Earthquakes...earthquakes. I mean, that's back in Matthew 24 where Jesus says there will be earthquakes. And in Revelation chapter 6 a great earthquake, verse 12, a great earthquake comes in connection with the sixth seal which puts it near to the end of the three and a half year period. Maybe it's that great earthquake of 6:12 that splits the ground and swallows the force.

Satan's relentless. He couldn't get after Israel himself. Attack one was thwarted when the Lord delivered them to safety. Attack two is thwarted when the ground opens and swallows the force. So here comes attack number three in verse 17, "And the dragon was enraged with the woman, went off to make war with the rest of her offspring who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus." He's not reached his absolute boiling point. He has not been able to destroy God's people, he never has been able to do that. That's the history of Israel. God is going to have His remnant, they're going to be saved, they're going to be delivered and they're going alive into the kingdom and they're going to be made of Jews and they're going to be made up of Gentiles. But when he can't get the woman and he can't get that...that group of Israelites that are out there and whatever mingled believing Gentiles may be with them, they are dominantly Jews that are hidden away, then he turns, verse 17, and he goes after the rest of her offspring.

Who's that? Well some would suggest that it's the hundred and forty-four thousand. Well it surely could include them if...we know they're out there preaching and preaching and preaching. It certainly could be them. Some have suggested it could also be the Gentile believers who are by faith the sons of Israel, are they not? And I would suggest to you that it would also include them. I think it's all who are the sons of Abraham by faith, I think it's the hundred and forty-four thousand, anybody else who is naming the name of Jesus Christ all over the earth. I just think he goes after every follower of the Lamb that he can find across the faith of the earth. He goes after everybody, he says, who keeps the commandments of God and holds to the testimony of Jesus.

The commandments of God refer to just that, biblical law, biblical teaching. That word entole appears, for example, twenty-five times in the writings of John, twenty-four of those twenty-five it means New Testament commands, the commands of the gospel, the marks of a true believer. The testimony of Jesus means the testimony that Jesus gave, the word of Christ, the revealed truth of Scripture. Anybody who obeys God and adheres to Scripture, he goes after them.

And does attack number three work? No, it doesn't work. We already saw that, didn't we, in the seventh trumpet, chapter 11 verse 15, Christ will reign and He will reign forever and ever. And the saints are going to be triumphant. God is going to protect them and take them into the kingdom. We know there will be many Gentiles in the kingdom, that's very clear because Christ rules the nations with a rod of iron. So the Gentiles have to be in there and in the thousand-year period will develop people and people and people and repopulate the world.

Well, it's an incredible picture. From the standpoint of Israel, the worst is yet to come. And yet from the standpoint of Israel, the best is yet to come. Will come their final judgment by God in the purging and refining, will come their final great holocaust at the hands and the power of Satan, but will also come their salvation and the promised kingdom. And in the end, Satan will be bound for the thousand years and then at the end of the thousand years, cast into the lake of fire.

When I study these kinds of things, and I've just given you a small portion of all that is here, but when I study these kinds of things, I am repeatedly overwhelmed that God has saved me. Aren't you? That He has chosen me, that He has called me to Himself and redeemed me. And all of this is something that I will never experience because He has planned for me eternal glory. Inconceivable.

Father, we look at this and all we can say is thank You, thank You that You have chosen us. We don't know how far this is away, it could be in the life time of people here that the church is taken away, Satan is thrown out of heaven, he hits the earth, the demons are released, the abomination of desolation comes, the judgments are falling all over the place and Satan is unleashing his venom. Lord, we thank You that we were not appointed unto wrath but unto glory. We thank You that in the end You will keep Your Word, Satan will not be triumphant, Jesus Christ will come and He will reign. Israel will believe. They will be saved and a host of Gentiles across this earth too numbered to be counted. Many will die as martyrs but they will awake to everlasting life. Many will live protected and they will go into the kingdom. We thank You that we'll come back only after all the holocaust is over to join You in the Kingdom. We aren't worthy, we aren't at all worthy, but we are thankful. Give to us a zeal, Lord, to communicate the saving message with all those who come across our life that we might be used by You to lead them to deliverance from the judgments to come. We thank You for such a privilege in our Savior's dear name. Amen.

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