

War On God's Woman

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An Exposition of Revelation Chapter 12.

The latter part of the book of Revelation concentrates on the later stages of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. Chapters 12-15 describe in detail the conflict of the church with the powers called "the dragon", "the beast", and "the image to the beast". Chapters 16-19 describe the judgments of upon these powers and their supporters.

"There appeared a great wonder [or sign] in heaven; a women 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." Revelation 12:1-2.

A WOMAN DENOTES A CHURCH

This great sign, or wonder, that the prophet sees, located in the sky. It is associated with the sun and the moon. This indicates that this is a symbolic prophecy and in prophecy a woman denotes a church. In the book of Revelation are presented two women. These symbols are derived from the Old Testament, where two women represent Babylon and Jerusalem.

"I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman." Jeremiah 6:2.

"Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon." Isaiah 47:1.

The book of Revelation, being based on the Old Testament, likewise presents two women: one is Jerusalem, spiritual Jerusalem, the church of God of Revelation 12. The other is the harlot, spiritual Babylon, the church of Satan of Revelation 17. The apostle Paul also symbolized God's church as a woman.

"I am jealous over you with godly jealousy, for I have espoused [or betrothed] you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ." 2 Corinthians 11:2.

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall be joined to bin wife, and they two shall be one flesh. Thin is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." Ephesians 5:31, 32.

CLOTHED WITH THE-SUN

In this symbolism of Revelation 12, the woman is pictured as being in glorious attire, "clothed with the sun". This represents the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Malachi likens Christ to the SUN of righteousness. "Unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." Malachi 4:2. God's people, are not seen by heaven in their own sinful attire; God sees them through the merits of Christ who is their substitute and righteousness.

“For he made him, [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21.

THE MOON UNDER HER FEET

The woman is standing on the moon which is represented as the church’s foundation.

“The church has one foundation, is Jesus Christ her Lord.”

The Sun represents Jesus Christ. The moon is an object that reflects the Sun’s light. What is it that reflects Jesus Christ in the realm of religion and is the basis of the Christian church? It is the Old Testament Scriptures. They are a reflection of Christ.

Jesus said,

“They are they that testify [or bear witness] of me.” John 5:39.

“All things are fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me.” Luke 24:44.

The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed.

The New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.

The Old Testament is the New Testament contained.

The New Testament is the Old Testament explained.

The Old Testament is the New Testament enfolded.

The New Testament is the Old Testament unfolded.

The Old Testament is the New Testament founded.

The New Testament is the Old Testament sounded.

The Old Testament is the New Testament instilled.

The New Testament is the Old Testament fulfilled.

The Old Testament in the New Testament is latent.

The New Testament in the Old Testament is patent.

The Old Testament is the New Testament in hope.

The New Testament is the Old Testament in scope.

One Old Testament description of the church of God, corresponds with the symbolism of Revelation 12.

“Who is she that looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.” Song of Solomon 6:10.

WOMAN REPRESENTS THE CHURCH OF ALL AGES

The Roman Catholic church claims that the woman of Revelation 12 represents the virgin Mary and the birth of Jesus. The answer to that claim is given in verses 5-6. After the birth of the child, it was caught up to God’s throne and the woman fled into the wilderness for 1260 days. But Joseph and Mary, after the birth of Christ, fled with him to Egypt, not the wilderness, and returned with the child to Nazareth, less than one year later. (1) The woman represents the church of God of all ages, in both Old and New Testament periods.

“This is he that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spoke to him in Mt Sinai and with our fathers who received the lively oracles [or scriptures] to give unto us.” Acts 7:38.

Israel in the wilderness, at Mt Sinai, was a part of the Old Testament church.

CROWN OF 12 STARS

The woman has on her head, “a crown of twelve stars.” The crown denotes ruler ship and organization. Twelve is consistently associated in scripture with church government. The pre-flood church, from Adam to Noah, was led by 12 patriarchs, if Shem and Japheth are included. (Genesis 5) The post flood church was also led by at least 12 patriarchs, from Shem to Jacob. The church in the Sinai wilderness consisted of twelve tribes. (2) The church of the times of the Judges of Israel was led by 12 judges. The Old Testament priesthood consisted of 24 courses, (2 x 12). (3) The New Testament church was led by 12 apostles. The final remnant church, the translation church, is symbolized by the number 144,000 which is a multiple of twelve. (4)

TRAVAILING IN BIRTH

“She being with child, cried, travailing in birth and pained to be delivered.” Verse 2.

This is a dramatic representation of God’s people awaiting the coming of the Messiah. Ever since Eve gave birth to Cain, God’s people had waited and longed for the deliverer. Scripture gives typical instances of their waiting. When the infant Jesus was brought to the temple to be dedicated, it records that there were two persons waiting with great longing for the Messiah. One was Simeon,

“Waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed to him that he should not see death until he had seen the Lord’s Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God and said, ‘Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.’ And Joseph and Mary marveled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed then and spoke unto Mary his mother, ‘Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against.’”

“There was one Anna, a prophetess, a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of great age... And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spoke of him to all who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” Luke 2:25-38.

THE MANCHILD

“She brought forth a man child.”

This was in fulfillment of the four-thousand-year old prophecy given to Adam and Eve that the seed, (or off-spring) of the woman, would bruise the serpent’s head. “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it the] shall bruise thy [Satan’s] head, and then shall bruise his [Messiah’s] heel.” Genesis 3:15.

In referring to this prediction, the Apostle Paul declared, “thy seed, which is Christ”. (Galatians 3:16) The Revelator by-passes the 33 years of Jesus’ life and emphasizes just two events. The first was his ascension.

TO GOD'S THRONE

“Her child was caught up to God and his throne” Verse 5. Forty days after Jesus’ resurrection,
“He was taken up and a cloud received him out of their sight.” Acts 1:9

Enoch and Elijah were also caught up to God, having been translated, but this man was caught up “to his throne”. The only man associated with God’s throne is “the man Christ Jesus”. (1 Timothy 2:5) The second event is Christ’s Second Advent. He would “rule all nations with a rod of iron”. This expression is drawn from Psalms 2:1-9 where it predicted that the Messiah would ultimately destroy his enemies.

“Thou shall break them with a rod of iron; thou shall dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” Psalm 2:9.

This prediction will be fulfilled at Christ’s return.

“Out of his mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treads the winepress of the fierceness and Wrath of Almighty God.” Revelation 19:15.

The Christ child who was born in a manger, one day will destroy the nations.

THE DRAGON

In verse 3 another symbol is introduced:

“There appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads,”

Here is symbolized a power that is to influence mankind until the final conflict. The first point of identification is found in verse 4,

“His tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and didst 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.”

This power would attempt to destroy Jesus Christ at his birth. That attempt was made by Herod the Great, the king of the Jews, a Roman governor.

“Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wrath, and sent forth and slew all the Children of Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.” Matthew 2:16.

Herod was made king of Judea by the Romans. He was a Roman governor. We conclude therefore, that the dragon represents Imperial Rome. The dragon had “seven heads and ten horns”. The seven heads are dealt with in Revelation 17 which we will discuss when we come to that chapter.

SEVEN CROWNS

The dragon had “seven crowns upon its heads”. Crowns denote ruler ship, showing that the period when this particular dragon power is spoken of here, is when the heads are ruling - not the ten horns. Revelation 17 reveals that the seven heads are successive kingdoms or empires, that reign one after the other whereas the ten horns are contemporaneous, that is, they all reign together. The crowns on the heads suggest that when the dragon is brought into the picture at the birth of Christ, one of the heads was reigning and that head or empire was Imperial Rome.

TEN HORNS

What do the ten horns represent? According to Daniel 7 they represent the ten kingdoms of Western Europe into which Western Rome ultimately divided. (Daniel 7:7, 24) These ten horns are mentioned ten times in Daniel and Revelation and they always represent initially, the ten divisions of western Europe. Therefore western Europe must form a part of the dragon power. We will be repeatedly confronted with the dragon power in later chapters, so it is important to understand the details, so that we can identify correctly who the dragon power represents in later chapters. It is “a great red dragon”. Red in scripture denotes sinfulness, 10 “Though your sins be as scarlet.”

(Isaiah 1:18) Imperial Rome was the enemy of God. It was termed in scripture, an “abomination”. (Matthew 24:15) One of the standards of Imperial Rome was the dragon.

“The pagan Romans used the image of the dragon on their standards as well as the eagle. These dragon standards were red.” (5)

Another ancient writer called Prudentius, tells how the Roman soldiers under Constantine, substituted the symbol of the cross for the symbol of the dragon,

“Instead of the dragon flags, which they carried, waved shout with the wind, they brought forward the illustrious wood [referring to the cross] which subdued the dragon.” (6)

This is further evidence that the dragon power was Imperial Rome. About 600 BC, the prophet Ezekiel described Egypt as, “the great dragon”.

“Behold I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lies in the midst of the rivers.” Ezekiel 29:3.

Later, Imperial Rome occupied Egypt and became the dragon. The Egyptian dragon tried to destroy the child Moses, Israel’s deliverer, soon after his birth. (7) Likewise, the Roman dragon attempted to destroy the deliverer of spiritual Israel, Jesus Christ, soon after his birth.

A THIRD OF THE STARS

“His tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven”. Verse 4.

Stars represent leaders. (Revelation 1:20; Daniel 12:13) In Israel’s system of government there were three elements or power: the king, the Sanhedrin and the priesthood. When Rome overran Judea, she removed Israel’s kingly power or authority, and in that sense she drew away a third part of the stars of heaven. The word “drew” means to “drag down”. This was also a fulfillment of Daniel’s prediction concerning the Little Horn.

“And it waxed great, even w the host of the heaven; and it cast down same of the host [God’s people] and of the stars to the ground, and stamped on them.” Daniel 8:10.

The question should now be asked: Why such animosity on the part of Imperial Rome towards an innocent infant? This indicates that a greater power than Rome is involved here. The invisible influence behind Rome was Satan. He is also symbolized as the dragon.

“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” Verse 9.

Satan is the invisible dragon, while Imperial Rome was the visible one. Satan is described by a quartet of terms: dragon, old serpent, devil and Satan. What do these represent? The dragon represents him as a persecutor and destroyer. The old serpent speaks of his cunning and deception. The devil indicates that he is a slanderer or liar. (John 8:44) The fourth term, Satan, denotes an adversary, especially in the setting of a

law court. He is the accuser of the brethren. But why should Satan, or Lucifer, seek the life of this innocent infant? The answer takes us back to the origin of the conflict.

WAR IN HEAVEN

“Mere was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and his angels.” Verse 7

How mysterious! Heaven, the perfect paradise, is where war began. The contestants were Michael and Lucifer. Who is Michael the archangel? The word “archangel” means the “chief” angel. “Michael” means “who is like God”. This refers to Jesus Christ who is “the express image of his [the Father’s] person. (Hebrews 1:3) At the second advent of Christ, the voice of the arch-angel raises the dead. Who is it that raises the dead? The only voice that raises the dead is the voice of Jesus Christ.

“Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his [Christ’s] voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life.” John 5:28, 29.

Michael, therefore must be the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God,

HEAVEN HATES NEUTRALITY

But what kind of war could be fought in heaven? It was an angelic war. There was no destruction of life. It was a struggle for supremacy, for control. This is fascinating. The Creator could have put Lucifer out of action in a flash, but he permitted his heavenly messengers to strive for the mastery. One side fought with Michael, the other with Lucifer. What was God’s purpose in permitting this? Undoubtedly it was to reveal their loyalty. It was a public declaration of their allegiance. God always calls for public displays of loyalty. Jesus said,

“For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, of him shall the son of man be ashamed.” Luke 9:26.

God will never accept neutrality. It is counted as a denial of Christ.(8)

STARS ALSO SYMBOLIZE ANGELS

In the heavenly conflict, Satan’s hosts were outnumbered. They comprised only a third of the angelic host; “his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven”. This prediction has a second application to Satan, the invisible dragon, and his drawing down of the angels of God. Stars also represent angels.

“The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.” Revelation 1:20.

This reveals that Satan must have been successful in deceiving a third of the angels, and that with him, they were cast out of heaven.

“And the angels which kept not their first estate, [“principality”, margin], but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.” Jude 1:6.

“For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.” 2 Peter 2:4.

Satan drew from their original estate, a third of the multiplied millions of angelic beings. What a devastating blow to the reputation of the Godhead. This is an awful enigma. “War in heaven”! This is where sin and war began. The problem of evil is an unfathomable mystery and the only satisfactory explanation is found in the Word of God. (9) However, in the great war in heaven, “they prevailed not”. (Verse 8) Satan and his angels were defeated. Michael, being co-creator with God the Father, naturally, would be victor, because Lucifer and his fellow angels are created beings. Jesus Christ is always the victor over Satan. This is why in our personal warfare with the powers of evil, if we have Christ with us, we also will be victorious.

“Neither was their [Satan and his angels I place found any more in heaven.” Verse 8
The fallen angels originally abode in the third heaven, the dwelling place of God. They were messengers of God, but by their rebellion, they forfeited their right to remain. They lost their first estate or principality. At what time did this expulsion occur? It must have been before the creation of this earth, because Lucifer, in Eden, after the creation of this earth, deceived Eve, indicating that he had already fallen. In verses 7-12 two expulsions of Satan are presented. Verse 9 reveals a second expulsion.

“He was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”

The first expulsion of Satan was to the place called hell, or “tartarus”.

“For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell.” 2 Peter 2:4 (Greek: “tartarus”)

THE 4 CASTINGS OUT OF SATAN

Tartarus is not this earth. (10) Lucifer and his angels originally were cast out before this earth was created, however after creation, Lucifer had access to this earth. Tartarus is a place of “chains of darkness” (I Peter 2:4) of “everlasting chains under darkness”. (Jude 1:6) Darkness, is the opposite of light, indicating that it is a place outside the presence of God. It was not Eden, nor could it apply to other worlds, for they are all realms of light, wherein is God’s presence, as illustrated in Genesis 2. We suggest that Tartarus is outer space, the area between the worlds. This is a place of darkness. We suggest that from outer space Satan had access to this and other worlds. Verse 9 indicates a second casting out, but this time to the earth.

Altogether, there will be four castings out of Satan. The first was from the exalted position of covering cherub, by the throne of God. The second, was his being cast out to this earth of verse 9. The third will be when he is cast into “the bottomless pit” of Revelation 20. The final one, is when he is cast into the lake of fire of Revelation 20:10, which means his utter destruction.

How can we harmonize the second casting out of Satan from heaven? How could Lucifer return to heaven when it says, “his place was found no more in heaven”? (Verse 8) Lucifer could never return to his original position in heaven as covering cherub, but the Scriptures indicate that he returned to heaven as the representative of this earth. In Eden, Lucifer usurped Adam’s position as leader of this world.

Scripture reveals that at various intervals, the leaders of other worlds assemble in council before God. (11) Satan, when he became “the prince of this world”, (12) by seducing Adam and Eve, he attended the heavenly councils as this world’s representative. Before the representatives of the universe he acted the part of “the accuser of the brethren”. (13) The second casting out of Satan was from these councils.

“For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.” Verse 10

But the question arises as to how and when was Satan cast out. On what grounds could Satan be excluded from the councils of heaven? The answer is given:

“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.” Verse 10.

Notice the phrase, “now is come salvation” or “now is come the victory”. When did salvation, or the victory come? The victory, or salvation, was accomplished at Calvary. When Christ expired upon the cross he sealed the doom of Satan.

“He also himself likewise took part of the same; [flesh and blood] that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” Hebrews 2:14.

Previously Jesus had declared,

“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.” John 12:31-33.

SATAN CAST OUT AFTER CALVARY

In what way did Jesus Christ, by his death, seal Satan’s doom? There is an old saying: “Give a fool enough rope and he’ll hang himself.”

Jesus did exactly that. He gave Satan enough rope so that he would overreach himself. Jesus allowed himself to come under Satan’s power. He allowed Satan to vent his implacable hatred upon him, and the enthralled universe beheld the incredible scene. They witnessed the amazing love of Christ, and on the other hand, the diabolical cruelty and hatred of Satan. Under the fierce and frenzied onslaught of Satan they beheld Jesus in all his innocence, love and compassion. As the nails were thrust through his quivering flesh, they heard his prayer, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.” At Calvary Jesus unmasked the character of Satan. He exposed him as a liar, an impostor and self seeker. On the other hand, Calvary revealed Jesus as the most loving and lovable of men.

“The pent up fires of envy and malice, hatred and revenge, burst forth on Calvary against the Son of God, while all heaven gazed on the scene in silent horror.” (14)

In this experience Jesus drew all to him. (The word “men” is not in the original text.)

“If I be lifted up, I will draw all unto me.” John 12:32.

THE BLESSINGS OF CALVARY

By his sufferings on behalf of others, by his utter selflessness, Christ drew all the universe to him. Any questions in the minds of the sinless beings, due to Satan’s rebellion, were there no more. They now knew that God was right and Satan was wrong. Any doubts regarding the Godhead were now dissolved. In this light the announcement was made:

“Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them” Verse 12

Not only did salvation come at the cross, but also “strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ.” (Verse 10) What does this mean? As a result of Calvary, power is available to the believer to successfully resist Satan.

“And the kingdom of our God.” Calvary made God’s kingdom sure. God’s law was vindicated. God’s character was revealed as righteous. Justice and mercy were seen as the foundation of His throne.

“And the power of his Christ.”

The Greek word for power is ‘exousia’ meaning ‘authority’. Now is come the authority of Christ. Because of Satan’s insinuations, Christ’s authority had been under question. The war in heaven had been over the question of authority, but now as a result of Calvary, Jesus’ authority is fully established. His authority as Savior, Priest, and King is no longer under question. At the close of his earthly ministry Jesus declared,

“All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” Matthew 28:18.

Verse 10 continues,

“For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.”

Ever since Satan usurped Adam’s position as vicegerent of this world, he had been the accuser before the heavenly councils. For four thousand years he had lured the saints into sin and had then accused them before heaven. Undoubtedly he also accused God of being unjust in expecting man to keep His “unjust” law.

THE POWER OF CHRIST’S SHED BLOOD

“And they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb.” Verse 11.

Satan, the mighty, angelic being can be overcome. And he is overcome in two ways: First, “they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb”, i.e. on the basis of Christ’s shed blood. In what way? Scripture employs fifteen different phrases to emphasize the power of the blood of Christ. “There is power in the blood.”

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| 1. It washes away our sins. | (Revelation 1:5) |
| 2. It cleanses us from all sin. | (1 John 1:7) |
| 3. It makes our spiritual garments white. | (Revelation 7:14) |
| 4. It propitiates or covers our sins. | (Romans 3:25) |
| 5. It gives remission for our sins. | (Hebrews 9:22) |
| 6. It purges the conscience. | (Hebrews 9:14) |
| 7. It justifies the believer. | (Romans 5:9) |
| 8. It gives peace to the guilty. | (Colossians 5:20) |
| 9. It makes us nigh to God. | (Ephesians 2:13) |
| 10. It redeems, or buys us back. | (Colossians 1:14; Ephesians 1:7) |
| 11. It gives life. | (John 6:54) |
| 12. It purchases the church of God. | (Acts 20:28) |
| 13. It gives boldness to enter into God’s presence. | (Hebrews 10:19) |
| 14. It makes us perfect to do His will. | (Hebrews 13:20-21) |
| 15. It overcomes Satan. | (Revelation 12:11) |

No wonder the hymn says,

“There is power, power, wonder working power In the precious blood of the Lamb.”

THE POWER OF PERSONAL TESTIMONY

The second way in which Satan can be overcome, is “by the word of their testimony”, i.e. on the basis of their testimony. One’s personal witness for Christ and the gospel can defeat Satan.

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Romans 10:9-10.

Testifying of the love and power of Christ, is vital for the Christian. As one author wrote,

“This is what everyone can do whose heart has been touched by the grace of God. This is the witness for which our Lord calls and for the want of which, the world is perishing. The gospel is to be presented not as a lifeless theory, but as a living force to change the life. God would have his servants bear testimony to the fact that through his grace, men may possess Christ’s likeness of character and may rejoice in the assurance of his great love.”(15)

“And they loved not their lives unto death.” Verse 11

As the result of their testimony many Christians came under the threat of death, but their love for Christ was so supreme that self-preservation had little or no place in their thinking. Serenely they faced the lions, and millions later faced the fiery stake. What a victory for Christ! What a conquest over the evil one! “They overcame him by the word of their testimony.”

SATAN'S ACCESS TO OTHER WORLDS CUT OFF

“Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them.” Verse 12.

This refers to the intelligent beings of sinless worlds. (16) Why the rejoicing of other worlds? Because Satan's activities as accuser, have been curbed or terminated. Until Calvary Satan had access to the heavenly councils, but since Calvary access is no longer available. He has been exposed and his doom sealed. As the author of “Desire of Ages” declares:

“Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His Administration was laid open before the sinless angels and before the heavenly universe. He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted. Whatever attitude he might assume he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts and before them accuse Christ's brethren of being clothed in garments of blackness and the defilements of sin. The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken.” (17)

SATAN ATTACKS THE CHURCH ON EARTH

“Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea, for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time.” Verse 12.

Knowing he has been exposed, Satan now vents his wrath upon the human race. He knows he has but a short time. He has approximately two thousand years until the Second Advent. Compared with eternity that is certainly short. Knowing his doom is sealed, he determines that he will take as many as possible to destruction with him and, in particular the woman, the church.

“And he persecuted the woman that brought forth the man child” Verse 13.

This was fulfilled first of all by the Jews. They were relentless in their persecution of the Christians. The synagogues were called “fountains of persecution”, because from them the persecution was organized and inspired. Secondly, it was fulfilled by the pagans, especially Pagan Rome. Two and a half million Christians, it is claimed, were martyred for their faith in the first century of the Christian era. The Egyptians, Persians and other pagan peoples were also involved, but most of all Pagan Rome. Every apostle except John was martyred. He was delivered by God from a cauldron of boiling oil. Jesus had warned them of persecution.

“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” John 16:33.

SATAN ATTACKS THE CHURCH FROM WITHIN

Persecution by Rome continued until Constantine the Great, about 320 AD. But it was in vain. Satan therefore changed his tactics. Instead of attacking from without, he determined to attack the church from within. Under a Christian guise, he entered the church and led it into apostasy. This fulfilled the great prediction of 2 Thessalonians 2 which had forecast the rise of the “man of sin”.

“And that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4.

Through the years, most Protestant scholars have been clear that this has been fulfilled in none other than the Church of Rome. This apostate body involved the majority of the professed church. It broke away from the true faith and finally by combining with political powers it obtained political supremacy and began to dominate the world of the day. In 538 AD, persecution commenced against those who held to the true faith. This led to the fulfillment of Revelation 12:14.

“And to the woman (the church) 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, times, and half a time, from the face of a serpent.”

In the Old Testament, ancient Egypt, which was also called “the dragon”, pursued ancient Israel into the wilderness of Sinai. Israel was pictured as being carried out of Egypt on eagle’s wings. (18) So it was with spiritual Israel. When Catholic dominance began, true believers were pursued by the dragon, the political agencies of the Papacy, and the church is represented as flying on eagle’s wings into the wilderness. This began in 538 AD under Justinian, the emperor of Eastern Rome. Procopius, the historian who followed the Roman armies declared:

“In his zeal to gather all men into one Christian doctrine, he [Justinian] recklessly killed all who dissented, and this too he did in the name of piety. For he did not call it homicide, when those who perished happened to be of a belief different from his own.”

THE CHURCH FLEES TO THE WILDERNESS

“Now the churches of these so-called heretics, especially those belonging to the Arian dissenters, were almost in credibly wealthy.”

“Agents were sent everywhere to force whomever they chanced upon to renounce the faith of their fathers. Thus many perished at the hands of the persecuting faction. But most of them by far quitted the land of their fathers, and fled the country and thenceforth the whole Roman Empire was a scene of massacre and flight.” (19)

John Chapman, Roman Catholic scholar, says of Justinian,

“He felt himself to be the vice-regent of the Almighty, to rule the world and bring all to the service of Christ. His wars were holy wars. In later centuries, a Byzantine battle began like a church ceremony. Even in the sixth century every enterprise was consecrated by religion.”

“He was well aware that judicious persecution is a great help to conversion! He strengthened the existing laws against pagans, Jews and heretics. Many were burnt at Constantinople after the Emperor had made vain attempts to convert them. Other heretics were given three months grace. All magistrates and soldiers had to swear they were Catholics.” (20)

PAPAL SUPREMACY BEGAN IN 538 AD

Church historian Dr Summerbell says,

“Justinian ... enriched himself with the property of all ‘heretics’ - that is, non-Catholics, and gave all their churches to the Catholics; published edicts in 538 AD compelling all to join the Catholic church in 90 days or leave the Empire and confiscated all their goods.” (21)

538 AD was the date that commenced “the time, times, and half a time”, of Papal supremacy.

“And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand, two hundred and three score [1260] days.” Verse 6.

Here we have clear evidence that the “time, times and half a time”, equals 1260 days, which represents 1260 years. (22) These are two of the seven times that this time period is mentioned in prophecy. (23) This particular period is highlighted in Daniel and Revelation, and wherever it is employed, a vital clue is provided by which to interpret prophecy. We need to beware of the Jesuit futuristic interpretation which tries to destroy this identification mark, by giving it a literal 3.5 year application in the future.

MEANING OF WILDERNESS

“The woman fled into the wilderness.”

What does the “wilderness” represent? In the Old Testament, the wilderness referred to the uninhabited areas of the Sinai peninsula. The Greek word in Revelation 12:6, 14 is “eremos”. It means a forsaken desert, empty place, an uninhabited place. It represents a place of seclusion or obscurity. A place away from the public gaze, the outback areas, remote from the centers of civilization. Did true Christian believers fly to such regions in 538 AD? Yes! Because of the oppressive persecuting decrees of Emperor Justinian, and the setting up of the Bishop of Rome as the “Universal Bishop of the World, and the Corrector of Heretics”, true Christians were compelled to leave the empire “amid massacre and flight.” (24)

SPECIAL PLACE FOR THE CHURCH IN THE WILDERNESS

“She fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God.”

Verse 14 says, “into her place”. There was a place for the church of God in the wilderness, in the outback areas, for 1260 years. “A place prepared of God”. Was there any particular location where the church of God resided? The most famous place of refuge in those dark years were the Waldensian valleys amid the Cottian Alps, 30 miles west of Turin, in northern Italy. Significantly this was about the middle of the Papal empire, in the very heart of its territory. There the Lord had a place prepared for many of his people during those trying years.

Some students of church history believe that at the time of the universal flood, when the surface of the earth was torn up and relaid, the Creator bore in mind the future needs of his persecuted people. Certain areas were formed that could serve as places of refuge.

MIDDLE AGES, HOLDING FAST TO THE TRUE FAITH

The Waldensian refuge was comprised of seven remarkable valleys, so formed, that at that time, they formed a natural fortress against invasion. One valley led into the other and finally within them was the seventh, a secret valley, accessible through a narrow, rocky canyon. In it was situated the little college, where they educated young men for the ministry. These valleys were self supporting. The soil was very fertile and provided sufficient food, including many nut trees. In the mountain soil were abundant quantities of slate which they used as building materials for their homes, many of which were hidden among the trees along the sides of the mountains. Here for centuries, the Vaudois, as they were called, or Waldenses, resided, maintaining the true faith. (25)

Their territory was within the diocese of Milan which for centuries was independent of the Roman See. Milan was closely connected with the Church of the East which had been founded by the apostles. For centuries the Christians of Milan withstood Papal influence. They kept the seventh day Sabbath when Rome was keeping the first day. In fact, whenever Ambrose, the famous Archbishop of Milan, visited Rome it was his practice to observe the Sunday in Rome, but in his home diocese of Milan, he observed the true Sabbath. The famous remark which has come down through the centuries has been credited to Ambrose, “When in Rome do what Rome does.” This was stated in connection with the keeping of Sunday when in Rome, and shows that the diocese of Milan continued to hold to the true faith many years after Rome had gone astray. (26)

THE FOOD OF THE CHURCH

“That they should feed her there.” Verse 6

“Where she is nourished.” Verse 14.

What is the food or nourishment of the Christian? It is the Word of God which is likened to spiritual milk, to spiritual bread, and spiritual meat. (27)

Were the Waldenses nourished by the Word of God in those dark days? They had the Bible translated from the uncorrupted manuscripts of Lucian, the famous scholar of Syria in post-apostolic times. They had the

Word of God in their own tongue. The Waldensian Bible formed the link between Lucian and the Protestant Reformers. Thus the Waldensians, having the Bible in their own language, became strong Christians. When the rest of Europe was deprived of scripture, when it was locked up in the Latin language, and few could even read it, the Waldensians studied and understood the Scriptures.

Student pastors, as they studied in the secret valley, were required to copy by hand, portions of Scripture as part of their ministerial course. These they took with them on their missionary journeys, two by two, in disguise, throughout Europe. These students first served as missionaries before they could serve as pastors in the valleys. Generally they traveled, disguised as merchants, minstrels or peddlers. They moved unobtrusively among the people. Silently, secretly they distributed their copies of the precious word. The Waldenses kept the lamp of truth burning, though dimly, throughout Europe during the Dark Ages. This finally resulted in the great Protestant Reformation. (28)

THE WALDENSES WERE DISTINCTIVE

The Waldensians in their lifestyle, exhibited a character of moral purity which was in stark contrast to the average lifestyle of the time. The populace were in appalling ignorance, poverty, superstition, moral degradation and mental slavery. As the historian says "It was the midnight of the world", but it was the noonday of the papacy. The contrasting lifestyle of the Waldensians soon marked them as heretics and so often led to their being arrested and martyred. (29) We need to beware of the current concept of the Middle Ages. Rome has invented a picture of that period which deceptively whitewashes history and hides the appalling lot of society under the Catholic yoke. (30) Truly the Middle Ages were "the midnight of the world". But often the darkness was dispelled by a burning Waldensian martyr dying at the stake for his faith. They were the unsung heroes of the faith during the Dark Ages and with them, of course, were other heroic peoples who also helped to keep the light burning. (31)

FLOODS OF PERSECUTION AGAINST THE CHURCH

"The serpent cast out of his mouth water as flood after the woman that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood." Verse 15.

Why the change here from "the dragon", to "the serpent", in verses 15-16? These terms are used interchangeably.

"The flood which came out of the dragon's mouth". Verse 16.

This shows that the dragon and serpent are identical. The reason, we suggest, that the word serpent is used, is because the serpent represents deception, lies and cunning. The serpent "beguiled Eve." "The woman, being deceived", by the serpent. The dragon denotes ferocity and destructiveness. We suggest that the reason why the flood is pictured as coming "out of the serpent's mouth" is because the persecution was inspired by malicious propaganda, by campaigns of lies and deceit. Through the preaching of friars and priests, through the proclamations of popes and prelates, by false promises of pardon and paradise, the populace were inspired to mount great crusades against the saints of God in the wilderness regions.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TERM 'FLOOD'

Why is this persecution symbolized by the term, "a flood"? "Waters as a flood." Verse 15. The Greek word is "potomos" which means "flood, river, stream, water". (Dr. Strong) "A flood of water like a river". (Dr. Dodderidge) This term is derived from the Old Testament, of the Euphrates river, which was often described as "the flood".

"Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood [Euphrates] even Terah the father of Abraham, and they served other gods, and I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood and led him throughout all the land of Canaan."

“Put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood [Euphrates]. Choose you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods on the other side of the flood, but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.” Joshua 24:2-3, 14-15.

The same truth is brought to view in Jeremiah 46:6-8 and 47:2, 3. In Daniel 9:26 it predicted the invasion by the Roman armies and the destruction of Jerusalem, under the term “a flood”. Daniel 12:6, 7 also alludes to the river Euphrates. The Euphrates was the appointed boundary between ancient Israel and Babylon.

“Unto thy seed have I given this land from the river of Egypt unto the great river - the river Euphrates.” Genesis 15:8.

When the snows of Mt. Ararat melted, the Euphrates often overflowed into the appointed territory of Israel. The prophets used this phenomenon to illustrate the invasion of Israel by her enemies from the north. The Holy Spirit uses this flooding, to illustrate the rising up or overflowing of the church’s enemies in an endeavor to destroy her. The term “Euphrates” is used in a similar vein in the sixth trumpet of Revelation 9 and also in the sixth plague of Revelation 16:12. (32)

During the 1260 years of Papal supremacy, as a result of serpentine propaganda, “the waters [or peoples] on which the whore sits” (Revelation 17) rose up to sweep away the saints. Multitudes were inspired to mount crusades against the “heretics”. The following are some of the crusades:

1. Against the Celtic Christians of Britain.
2. Against the non-Catholic Christians of Thrace in 538 AD.
3. Against the Ostrogoths in Italy in 538 AD.
4. Against the Waldenses in Northern Italy. Several crusades were organized into their valleys by Catholic leaders.
5. Against the Albigenses in south and western France.
6. Against the Christians of the East.
7. In Ireland by Henry 2 of England with the support of the Papacy.
8. Against the Lollards, in England the followers of John Wycliff.
9. Against Spanish Protestants at the time of the Spanish Inquisition.
10. Against the Hussites, the followers of John Huss in Bohemia.
11. Against German Protestants at the time of the Reformation.
12. Against Swiss Protestants by Catholic authorities.
13. Against Dutch Protestants by Phillip 2 of Spain.
14. Against English Protestants by the Spanish Armada.
15. Against European Protestants in the 30 Years War.
16. Against the French Protestants called Huguenots in the St. Bartholemew massacre, by French Catholic kings, and the oppression of the Huguenots in later years.
17. Against the Scottish Covenanters by the pro Catholic Stuart kings when 18,000 were done to death.

These were some of the crusades comprising the flood of persecution that came out of the mouth of the dragon or serpent, in an endeavor to sweep away God’s people. Some claim that the water from the serpent’s mouth represents the false teachings of evolution. But the events of Verses 15, 16 apply to the 1260-year period of 538-1798. Darwin and modern evolution commenced about 1844, well after 1798.

GOD’S RESPONSE TO THE PERSECUTION

“The Earth helped the woman”. Verse 16.

In response to the flood of persecution God intervened to aid his people.

“And the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.” Verse 16

What is represented by the earth? It has been claimed that the earth represents the science of archaeology which uncovered the remains of lost civilizations and confirmed the Bible. But this science did not begin until about 1798, “the time of the end”. Archeology could be a part of “the increase of knowledge”, which the prophet Daniel had predicted, but it was too late to find its fulfillment in “the earth opening her mouth”, of Verse 16.

Does the word “earth” have a literal or symbolic application? Six times in this chapter, the word earth is used:

1. “The dragon cast a third of the stars to the earth” (Verse 4)
2. “The dragon (Satan) was cast out into the earth.” (Verse 9)
3. “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth.” (Verse 12)
4. “The dragon saw he was cast to the earth.” (Verse 13)
5. “The earth helped the woman.” (Verse 16)
6. “The earth opened her mouth.” (Verse 16)

Other terms in this chapter, such as “the woman”, “the mouth of the serpent”, and “the flood” - are symbolic. Should we understand the term “earth” to be symbolic also? Maybe it has a literal as well as a symbolic application. Did God employ the literal elements of the earth, the natural world, to deliver his saints from destruction during those dark years? Yes: he certainly did. He used the mountain fastnesses, the isolated valleys, deep forests, secret caves, cloud and mist, wind and tempest, water and floods to protect and deliver his people. The Waldensians, in one of their hymns, celebrate how God used the elements to deliver them from their foes:

HYMN OF THE VAUDOIS MOUNTAINEERS

For the strength of the hills we bless
Thee, Our God, our fathers' God!
Thou hast made Thy children mighty
By the touch of the mountain sod.
Thou hast fixed our ark of refuge
Where the spoiler's feet never trod
For the strength of the hills we bless Thee,
Our God, our fathers' God.

We are watchers of a beacon
Whose light must never die;
We are guardians of an altar,
Midst the silence of the sky;
Thy rocks yield founts of courage,
Struck forth as by thy rod;
For the strength of the hills we bless Thee,
Our God, our fathers' God. (33)

The literal elements of the earth were strikingly used by God. When one reads the gripping accounts of how the Scottish Covenanters were delivered from their pursuers, it is evident that God used mist, fogs and cloud. When the Spanish Armada sailed against Protestant England, the purpose of which was to bring England back to the Catholic faith, it was wind and tempest that saved England. On Plymouth Hoe, beside the great statue of Sir Francis Drake there stands a smaller monument. It commemorates the defeat of the Armada. On the monument are the words, “Thou didst said Thy winds, and they were scattered.”

Indisputably, the literal elements of the Earth, helped the woman. Dr. Wylie in his portrayal of the Armada's destruction says:

“Even the Spaniards themselves confessed that the divine hand was upon them; that One looked forth at times from the storm cloud that pursued them, and troubled them. Christendom at large was solemnized: the ordinary course of events had been interrupted; the heavens had been bowed, and the great Judge had descended upon the scene. The deliverance was a common one to the Protestant kingdoms. All shared in it with England, and each in turn took up this song of triumph ...it seemed as if the days of Miriam with their judgments and songs of triumph, had returned, and that the Hebrew prophetess had lent her timbrel to England, that she might sing upon it the destruction of a mightier host than that of Egypt. England began the song as was meet, for around her isle had the Armada been led, a spectacle of doom; but soon, from beyond the German ocean, from the foot of the Alps, from the shores of Scotland, other voices were heard swelling the anthem, and saying, Sing ye to the Lord for he has triumphed gloriously.” (34)

When the few remaining Spanish galleons finally limped back to Spain, Phillip 2 lamented, “I sent my ships to fight with men not to combat the winds.” But God had intervened and used the winds to bring disaster to the plans of. Rome to overcome the people of God. History records how the Dutch Protestants were besieged by Spanish Catholic armies, and how winds, tides, and floods intervened, enabling the Dutch to escape destruction.

“EARTH” ALSO HAS A SYMBOLIC APPLICATION

Does “the earth”, also have a symbolic application in these verses? The earth is the opposite to the sea (or waters), and in prophecy, waters symbolize of multitudes, peoples, nations and tongues;” a thickly populated area. The earth, being the opposite to waters, could represent a sparsely populated area. During the 1260 years, did God's people resort to such areas to find protection? They certainly did. As we have previously shown, it was the Alpine Valleys of Northern Italy, the forest recesses of Bohemia, the extensive forest areas of south-west France, extending to the glens and dales of the Pyrenees. Also the isolated areas of Britain, and the adjacent islands such as Tona and Lindisfarne.

The regions of Ethiopia, cut off from papal intrusion by the Moslem conquests, the areas of the Ukraine - southern Russia - where German Christians called Pietists migrated because of opposition in the 17th century. The Caucasus and Armenia, and areas of the east where the Church of the East flourished, cut off from Papal influence by Arab and Turkish rule. The remote mountain valleys of Southern France where the French Protestants called Huguenots, resorted for worship amid fierce persecution from Catholic civil and religious leadership. These French believers in the wilderness regions, were literally called “the Church in the Desert”. (35)

Finally, the sparsely populated portions of the new world of America, where the papacy did not dominate. In the 17th and 18th centuries America came into being, the land of freedom. That nation originated chiefly with the Pilgrim Fathers who forsook England because of religious intolerance by church and king.

EARTHLY RULERS PROTECTED THE SAINTS

In scripture the term “earth” is also used to represent the rulers or inhabitants of the earth. (36) “The earth is generally understood of some earthly power which is raised up to protect the church against persecution”. (37)

Did any earthly rulers protect God's people throughout the 1260 years of persecution? Yes! The first one of note was Theoderic, King of the Ostrogoths of the sixth century. (38) Count Raymond of Toulouse was a noted protector of the Albigenses. The king and queen of Bohemia were protectors of John Huss and his followers. The Protestant princes of Germany protected Luther and his followers. Some of the independent city states of Germany protected the Anabaptists. Some cantons of Switzerland protected Zwingli and his followers. The city state of Geneva gave asylum to John Calvin and French and British Protestants. Protestant England intermittently gave protection to Protestants. William of Orange - 01W'illiam the

Silent” - was another outstanding champion of religious liberty who protected Dutch and German Protestants. Certain Dutch city states were also a refuge for British Independents such as the Pilgrim Fathers.

Gustaf Adolphus, King of Sweden, led the Protestant armies against the Catholic European powers in the Thirty Years War, in order to protect the Protestants. Oliver Cromwell, during the English Commonwealth, was a great protector of English dissenters. His army was composed mostly of Congregationalists. He protected the people from the intolerant pro-Catholic Anglican church. He was also a threat to the persecutors of the Waldenses of his day. Count Zinzendorf of Saxony was a protector of the Moravians who had fled from Roman Catholic persecution in Moravia.

Probably the greatest of all, was the United States of America which by legislating civil and religious liberty, became the home of the oppressed. Some would also include the French Revolution, which, by overthrowing the feudal system and establishing the principles of freedom, equality and fraternity, dramatically changed the attitude of much of the world towards religious oppression. Thus, the earth in a symbolic sense, opened her mouth and swallowed up the flood of persecution.

THE TRUTH REGARDING THE REMNANT

We now examine the final verse of this chapter.

“The dragon was wrath 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.” Revelation 12:17.

“The dragon was wrath AT [Greek] the woman, and went [away, or departed, as one baffled in his attempt to carry the woman away in the flood of persecution], to make war with the remnant of her seed.” What is the meaning of the term “remnant”? Some versions render this word, “the rest”, or “remainder” of the woman’s seed. The word “remnant” means “that which remains, residue, rest” according to Dr. Strong. The dragon makes war with the residue, or the rest of the church’s followers.

In Revelation 12 there are two “seeds”. The man child, Jesus, (Verse 5) and “the remnant of her seed”, or offspring. (Verse 17) This means the remainder, or the last of her offspring. It clearly refers to the final group of God’s people before the Second Advent of Christ.

REMNANTS THROUGHOUT HISTORY

The key to understanding the term “remnant”, is found in the Old Testament. God’s people are continually pictured as a remnant, as survivors; a minority, clinging to the true faith while the majority of the professed people of God compromise with error and the world. The New Testament confirms this Old Testament concept. Jesus declared:

“Enter ye in at the straight gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction and many there be that go in thereat, because straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leads to life and few there be that find it.” Matthew 7:13, 14.

God’s true people have always been a minority, always a remnant.

“Fear not little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Luke 12:32

Truth has ever been on the scaffold and error has ever been on the throne.

THE REMNANTS IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES

Before the Flood, God's people, the descendents of Seth, were called "the sons of God" (39) in contrast to the descendents of Cain who were called the sons or "daughters of men". (40) Finally there was compromise and intermarriage between the two groups and as a result the whole earth became corrupt. But a remnant was saved, consisting of Noah and his family.

In the post flood era, from Shem to Abraham, God's people, the Shemites, were opposed to the Hamites, the builders of the tower of Babel. Again there was compromise, and idolatry soon permeated the people of God. Again, God saved a remnant, the family of Abraham whom he called out to the land of Canaan.

In the Exodus of Israel from Egypt to Canaan, for 40 years, Israel was "the church in the wilderness". As a result of their rebellion, God decreed that all adults should die in the wilderness; except a remnant, comprising Caleb and Joshua and their families.

In the Promised Land, from the time of Joshua to Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, repeatedly the people of God compromised, and were finally delivered into Babylonian captivity. Only a remnant remained, Jeremiah and his associates. After Israel's captivity and deliverance by Cyrus, God called them to return to their homeland, but only a remnant responded. These were the Jews under Zerubabel,

Ezra and Nehemiah. At the time of the First Advent, the Jews, in a different form, compromised again, but God saved a remnant. They were the Jews who accepted Jesus Christ as the Messiah. They formed the nucleus of the Christian church.

REMNANTS IN THE CHRISTIAN ERA

In the early Christian church, from the time of the Apostles to Constantine, after fierce persecution, the Christians came under royal favor. This resulted in compromise and apostasy, but God saved a remnant. They were those who resisted the apostasy and withdrew from the centers of civilization and dwelt in the wilderness regions in 538 AD.

In the time of the Protestant Reformation, from 1517 to about 1700 AD, God's professed people were the Lutherans, the Calvinists, (the Reform Church), and the Anglicans. Once again there was compromise. They did not fully forsake Catholicism and as a result those churches became spiritually dead. But out of them God called a remnant. These were the dissenters, the independents, the Anabaptists, the Baptists, the Pietists, the Moravians and the Methodists etc.

REMNANT OF THE LAST DAYS

Beginning about 1798 God's people were called to receive further light from Scripture, but sadly the majority neglected to follow the increasing light, and as a result they began to slip down the path of apostasy. But once again, God preserved a remnant. They were they who received the light and embraced the Three Angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12. (41) We suggest that this is the remnant of the end time.

According to Revelation 12, the woman - the true church - is to be in the wilderness, in obscurity, for 1260 years, from 538 to 1798 AD. This suggests that while there were Christian churches in existence, as noted above, prior to 1798, these bodies did not comprise the true church as such. While God used these various groups mightily in his cause, yet they did not comprise the true church. That church as such, was out of the public eye, unrecognized, in the wilderness.

HOW TO IDENTIFY THE FINAL REMNANT

It is not until after 1798 AD that we should expect to see the true church publicly emerge. How then can one identify the true remnant of the last days? Revelation 12 presents seven unique specifications by which the sincere searcher may be able to distinguish the true remnant.

1. It publicly appears after 1798.
2. It will be a minority group - a remnant.
3. It will be apostolic - i.e. similar in belief and practice to the apostles.
4. It will be unpopular. It receives the wrath of the dragon.
5. It keeps the commandments of God.
6. It will have the testimony of Jesus.
7. It is expecting the Second Advent, i.e. it is an Adventist church.

1. What religious group arose after 1798? The answer is that hundreds of religious groups arose in that period. Why should this be? In order to confuse the searcher. Satan understands the prophecies of scripture; he was aware that the true church would return to the public arena after 1798, therefore he endeavored to hinder the purpose of God by a clever counter. After 1798 he inspired the rise of numerous religious bodies, and each one claimed in sincerity, that it was the true church or that it, alone, had the truth. How clever but how confusing! Therefore to find the true remnant, we must pass to the other six distinguishing marks.

2. It will be a minority group. All of the groups that arose after 1798 were minority groups but some are no longer in this category.

3. It is apostolic. To illustrate this point, we use the term remnant as understood in the commercial world. A remnant is a small piece of material left over from a bolt of cloth. That remnant is of the same texture, color and pattern as the rest of the material comprising the bolt. So also with the final remnant of the church. It will be the same in belief and practice as the true church right back to the apostles. It is significant to note, that nearly all of the religious groups that have risen since 1798, claim to be apostolic. Therefore one must examine the New Testament to determine the teachings and character of the apostolic church.

4. It will be unpopular. It will be the target of Satan's wrath. This is where the first big difference appears. Most of the groups that arose after 1798 are now popular. The Pentecostals are popular. The Church of Christ is popular. The Salvation Army is popular. On the other hand, Jehovah's Witnesses have been very unpopular and they claim that this is evidence that they must be the true people of God. But they must fulfill all the other six specifications in order to comprise the remnant.

5. The remnant keep the commandments of God. This cancels out all who reject God's law of ten commandments, and sadly this involves the great majority of all religious groups. What group endeavors to keep and to teach, all of God's commandments? This must include the fourth commandment, which involves the seventh day Sabbath, for the Scripture says, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." (James 2:10)

It must also include baptism by immersion, the ordinance of humility as commanded by Jesus in John 13. It involves obedience to the laws of health according to Acts 15 which hark back to the health laws given by God to Moses. More than one group observes the true Biblical seventh-day Sabbath, but nearly all fall down in the area of temperance and healthful living.

6. The sixth point is particularly relevant at this stage. The final remnant will possess the testimony of Jesus. What is the testimony of Jesus? (See Appendix 1.)

"The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Revelation 19:10.

What is the spirit of prophecy? A parallel verse throws light on this expression. "He said to me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God." Revelation 22:9.

Notice the parallels between these two verses which shows that the spirit of prophecy involves the existence of a prophet.

REVELATION 19:10

“See thou do it not!”
 “I am thy fellow servant”
 “And of thy brethren
 “Which have the testimony of Jesus.”
 “Worship God.”
 “For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy”

REVELATION 22:9.

“See thou do it not”
 “I am thy fellow servant”
 “And of thy brethren”
 “The prophets.”
 “Worship God.”

The “testimony of Jesus” is the equivalent of “the prophets”. In scripture the term, “testimony” is employed in both Old and New Testaments, to describe the messages which the prophets received from God.

“Thy prophets testify against thee.” Nehemiah 9:34.
 “And testifies against them in the prophets.” Nehemiah 9:30.
 “Thy testimonies wherewith thou didst testify against them.” Nehemiah 9:34.
 “I testify among you this day.” Deuteronomy 32:46.
 “They rejected his testimony.” 2 Kings 17:15.
 “You have not obeyed his testimonies.” Jeremiah 44:23,
 “To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them.” Isaiah 8:20.

In the book of Revelation, the word “testimony”, is used in connection with the prophet John, when he received the message from God for the church.

“I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify to you these things in the churches.” Revelation 22:16, 18, 20.
 “I testify to every man.” Revelation 22:16, 18, 20.
 “He that testifies these things said, Surely I come quickly.” Revelation 22:16, 18, 20.
 “Who bear record of the word of God and of the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Revelation 1:2.
 “The testimony of Jesus Christ.” Revelation 1:9.
 “The testimony of Jesus.” Revelation 19:10.

The word testimony, or testify, is employed eight times in Revelation and it always refers to the revelation given by God to His prophets. (See Appendix I.) This calls for the existence of one who has the prophetic gift. Thus within the final remnant there will exist the prophetic gift, there will be one who possesses the unique gift of prophecy. But do not the Mormons claim to have the gift of prophecy in the person of Joseph Smith? Yes! But the scriptures present at least nine rigid tests by which believers may test anyone claiming to be a prophet. (See Appendix 2.) These were never fulfilled by Joseph Smith.

7. The seventh point is that the final remnant, existing in the end time, will be aware of the imminence of the Second Advent. It will be a group living in expectation of the Advent. In obedience to the instruction of Christ, it will be proclaiming the Second Advent and urging preparation for it. In other words, it will be an Adventist group of people.

Who then, comprise the final remnant of the end-time? What group is endeavoring to fulfill the seven specifications that identify the true remnant. There is only one group that fits the picture and that is the world-wide, Seventh-day Adventist movement. While it is a minority group, yet it is the most widespread Protestant movement in the world today.

Seventh-day Adventists claim that they are the hearers of God’s last message to the world, the message that prepares God’s people worldwide, for the Second Advent of Christ. Does this mean that Seventh-day Adventists believe that they alone, are the people of God?

No: They believe that they have God's final message for the world. They believe that there are other remnants of God's people in the churches of Christendom. There are other remnants of God's people - born again believers - who are living according to the light that they have. However these remnants do not fulfill the seven specifications of the true remnant. What then will be the lot of the remnants that are scattered throughout the various churches of Babylon? Scripture reveals that God has set a special standard, in order to fit the saints for translation. This standard is revealed in the character of the 144,000, the number that represents or symbolizes the final remnant of God's people. (42) Those who fail to permit God to introduce within them the character essential for translation, will be shaken out of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Only those who are classed by God as over comers will comprise the final remnant. This will involve only a minority of Seventh-day Adventists. (43) the majority of the final remnant will comprise the remnants who are now in Babylon but who ultimately will come out of Babylon. In the final call of God to his people, in Revelation 18:1-4, He calls out of Babylon, all those who still belong to Christ.

"Come out of her my people that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues." Revelation 18:4.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that there will be large numbers who will come out of the various religious bodies, and join with them in the keeping of all the commandments of God and be ready for the coming of Christ. They believe that the majority of God's people are in the churches of Babylon, (44) There are godly remnants within those churches, which finally will come out and unite with those Seventh-day Adventists who are true to Christ. This means that finally, "there will be one fold and one shepherd", just as it was in Jesus' day. Jesus said,

"Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." John 10:16.

Today God has numerous "other sheep", not of the fold of the final remnant. But he says, "them also I must bring and shall hear my voice." When the final call of Christ goes to the world, those Christians still in Babylon, will hear His voice, calling them to keep all of God's commandments, calling them out of Babylon, calling them into the final remnant. At that time, "there shall be one fold and one shepherd." That one fold will be:

"The remnant of her seed that keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Revelation 12:17.

The prediction also declares that,

"The dragon was wrath 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."

Elsewhere we have shown that the dragon represents the political powers whom Satan uses to make war on the saints. This warfare is detailed in the 13th chapter of Revelation onwards. In these chapters is introduced the beast with seven heads that rises out of the sea, the second beast with two horns like a lamb that rises out of the earth, and the image to the beast. These powers will be involved in the great final conflict with Christ and the final remnant of His people.

GOD'S LATTER DAY MOVMENT IN SCRIPTURE**ITS CONCEPT**

2 Corinthians 6:14-18
Joel 2:32
Titus 2:11-14
1 John 3:1-3

ITS COMMISSION

Matthew 24:14;
Matthew 28:19-20
Revelation 10:11;
Revelation 14:6-11

ITS COMPOSITION

Romans 9:27; 11:5
Revelation 3:2;
Revelation 18:1-5

ITS CHARACTER

Revelation 7:1-3;
Revelation 14:1-5, 12
Romans 9:27; 11:5

ITS COMMITMENT

Luke 9:57-62
Revelation 14:4;
Revelation 17:14

ITS CREDENTIALS

Revelation 12:1-17

ITS CONVICTION

John 1:6; 19-23
Matthew 11:1-8

APPENDIX I. THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS

There is some misunderstanding on this question. What does “the testimony of Jesus” mean? Some claim that it means “the testimony TO Jesus Christ”, or the “testimony ABOUT Jesus Christ.” The RSV, the New English Bible, Phillip’s translation, the 20th Century New Testament, all translate this phrase, “the testimony TO Jesus Christ.” This brings into question the term, “the testimony OF Jesus Christ” as translated in the KJV. Four times the term “the testimony of Jesus Christ” is used in Revelation. (1:2; 1:9; 12:17; 19:10.) In the first, second and fourth references, the Revised Standard Version renders the phrase as, “the testimony OF Jesus Christ”, but when it translates Revelation 12:17 it translates it as “the testimony TO Jesus Christ.” This is pointedly inconsistent on the part of the translators. In “The New English Bible”, when it translates Revelation 1:2 it says, “the testimony TO Jesus Christ.” This again is inconsistent. Likewise with Phillip’s translation, where, in translating the same two verses, he also is inconsistent. On the other hand, when Dr. Weymouth translates Revelation 12:17 he says, “the testimony OF Jesus Christ”, but in the other three verses he also is very inconsistent. He translates Revelation 19:10 as “the testimony TO Jesus Christ”. Revelation 1:9 he translates, “the testimony BY Jesus Christ”. Revelation 1:2 he translates, “the testimony TO Jesus Christ”. Yet, in his footnote under Revelation 1:2 he says, “The literal Greek is, ‘the testimony OF Jesus Christ.’” (45)

Nine other translations, or versions, render Revelation 12:17 as, “the testimony OF Jesus Christ.” These are: the King James, the New King James, Moffat, The New International, the Douay, Marshall, Fenton,

The Amplified New Testament, and Jamieson, Fausset & Brown. This assures us that the Greek of Revelation 12:17 is indeed, “the testimony OF Jesus Christ.”

APPENDIX 2

The Nine Tests of A True Prophet A. Physical Tests of

A Prophet In Vision

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| 1. Loss of Natural Strength. | Daniel 10:7-8; 16-17. |
| 2. Receives Supernatural Strength. | Daniel 10:18-19. |
| 3. Breathing stops. | Daniel 10:17. |
| 4. Eyes Remain Open. | Numbers 24:2-4; 15-16. |
| 5. Unconscious of earthly surroundings. | 2 Corinthians 12:1-4. |

B. Moral Tests

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1. Teaches Jesus Christ came in the flesh. | 1 John 4:1-3. |
| 2. In harmony with the law and the testimony. | Isaiah 8:19-20. |
| 3. Predictions Come True. | Deuteronomy 18:20-22. |
| 4. Life and influence, consistently for good. | Matthew 7:15-20. |

The first five tests declare that the person fulfilling them is under the influence of supernatural powers. The final four tests determine whether the supernatural power is of God or Satan.

REFERENCES

1. Matthew 2:13-23.
2. The church in the Sinai wilderness actually was composed of 13 tribes but they are always described as twelve tribes.
3. 1 Chronicles 24:1-18.
4. Revelation 7:1-4; 14:1-5.
5. Emmanius Marcellinius. “The History of the Roman Empire”, Book 16, chapter 12.
6. Aurelius Clemens Prudentius. See “Encyclopedia Britannica”, 1911, Edition. Volume 22, page 518.
7. Exodus 1:7-22.
8. “If God abhors one sin above another of which his people are guilty, it is doing nothing in case of an emergency. Indifference and neutrality in a religious crisis is regarded by God as a grievous crime, and equal to the very worst type of hostility against God.” Ellen G. White, “Testimonies”, Volume 3, page 281.
9. For an in depth study on “The Origin of Evil”, see The Author’s –
“Why Do The Innocent Suffer?”
Or Ellen G. White. The Great Controversy, page 492-504.
Patriarch’s And Prophets, pages 33-34.
10. The Greek word “Tartarus is used once only in the Bible and it appears to be the place or abode of evil spirits.
11. Job 1:6-7; 2:1.
12. John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11.
13. Job 1:8-11; 2:3, 5.
14. Ellen G. White. The Great Controversy, page 501.
Ellen G. White. Testimonies to Ministers, page 168.
15. Ellen G. White. Ministry of Healing, page 99.
16. See, “Are Other Worlds inhabited?” in “New Heaven and New Earth”, by the Author.
17. Ellen G. White. Desire of Ages, page 761.
18. Exodus 19:1-4.
19. Procopius. Secret History of The of Court of Justinian, pages 121-122; 138-139.

20. John Chapman. Studies in The Early Papacy, page 222.
21. Dr. N. Summerbell.. History of The Early Christian Church, pages 310-311.
22. The Year-Day principle of a day for a year in symbolic prophecy is employed in Ezekiel 4:6 and Numbers 14:34.
23. Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelation 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5.
24. C. Edwardson. Facts of Faith, pages 40-42.
25. The word Vaudois or Waldenses means “people of the Valleys.” An attempt has been made by the church of Rome to identify the Waldenses as the followers of Peter Waldo of Lyons, France. This has been done to try to hide the truth that there were dissenters from the Papacy centuries before the Protestant Reformation.
26. Dr. L.E. Froom. Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers, Volume 1, page 419.
27. I Peter 2:2; John 6:51-52, 63; Hebrews 5:12-13.
28. Dr. J.A. Wylie. The History of Protestantism, Volume 1, pages 23-32.
29. H.C. Lea. History of The Inquisition of The Middle Ages, Volume 1, pages 86-87.
30. Professor A. Baudrillart. The Catholic Church, The Renaissance & Protestantism, pages 182-184. Andrew Steinmetz. History of the Jesuits, Volume 1, page 13.
31. Other groups that maintained the true faith were the Celtic church in Britain etc. The Albigenses of South West France, the Hussites of Bohemia, the Paulicians of Armenia, the Pietists of Germany and the Ukraine and many other groups.
32. See the Author’s “The Drying Up of The great River Euphrates”.
33. “The Hymn of The Vaudois Mountaineers”, Quoted by William Spicer. “Beacon Lights of Prophecy”, page 273.
34. Dr. J.A. Wylie. The History of Protestantism, Book 23, chapter 19.
35. Samuel Smiles. The Huguenots in France, page 88.
36. Jeremiah 22:9; Micah 1:2; Habakkuk 2:20.
37. Bishop Ellicott on Revelation 12:15-16.
38. Gibbon. Decline & Fall, Chapter 39, Paragraph 17, pages 229-232.
39. Genesis 4:26, margin.
40. Genesis 6:2-4.
41. See the author’s “God’s Final Ultimatum to Men.”
42. See the Author’s, “The 144,000”.
43. Ellen G. White. The Great Controversy, p.608.
Ellen G. White. Testimonies To The Church, Volume 5, pages 80-81, 236.
44. Ellen G. White. The Great Controversy, page 383.
45. Dr. Weymouth. The New Testament In Modern Speech, Footnote under Revelation 1:2.

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