

More Than Meets the Eye

📖 Revelation 12

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We are studying the Book of Revelation as the finale of our series Major Prophetic Passages. Reviewing from Revelation 6 we see this as the seventieth week of Daniel, the final seven years of the prophetic calendar revealed in Daniel 9:27. According to that verse, the event that initiates the seven years is the anti-Christ entering into or forcing the nation Israel into a treaty. I say forced because the Hebrew verb there indicates pressure upon Israel. My take is that they will be in circumstances that demand the leadership do something to protect the nation. And evidently since they come into league with the anti-Christ, he will already be someone substantial, otherwise they wouldn't put their security in him. But they will and this will begin the further rise of the anti-Christ to power. I take it that this treaty will happen essentially at Rev 6 and that the rider of all four horses is the anti-Christ. It's tracing his early career. First, he brings world peace by means of disarmament. Then he takes away the peace by war and bloodshed. Then he brings economic policies of inflation that begin to prepare the world for his later economic policies of total subjugation by taking his mark. Finally he begins war against those of other kingdoms who will not subject themselves to him and his policies. All four developments in his plan appear natural and explainable, but are actually the wrath of God, because the unveiling of the anti-Christ is the beginning of the wrath of God. The fifth seal is the martyr's prayer for divine justice on their slayers. The sixth is remarkable because it is a break from the natural and explainable to the supernatural. It is a great shock wave that shakes the entire planet and the world has no explanation other than to give credit for this wrath to God and the Lamb who sits on the throne. So, by this point we are about half way into the first half of the seventieth week. Then in Rev 7 there is an interlude where we learn about the 144,000 Jewish witnesses, 12,000 from each tribe. The reason they are sealed is because they are commissioned to take the gospel to all the earth during the coming seventh seal judgment. So the commission to do this no longer belongs to the church as Matt 28:19-20 teaches, but to 144,000 Jews, and this is another reason we think the church is already absent. Then we see the results of their ministry, thousands upon thousands from all around the world trust in Christ and even though they are killed by the anti-Christ in the second half of the Tribulation, they are ultimately victorious in the new heaven and new earth. In Rev 8 the seventh seal is broken and there is silence in heaven for thirty minutes. The reason is because those in heaven saw the seven trumpets, seven more judgments to come. So the seventh seal contains, or is, the seven trumpets. The first trumpet is judgment upon a third of the earth and its vegetation,

upon which man depends. The second trumpet is judgment upon a third of the seas and the life in the seas, upon which man depends. The third trumpet is judgment upon a third of the rivers and fresh waters, upon which man depends. The fourth trumpet is a judgment upon a third of the sun, moon and stars, upon which man depends for telling time and seasons. So in the first four trumpets the creation upon which man depends, God is destroying, showing man that these things in nature do not exist in and of themselves, but are the gifts of God. And the purpose is so that men would believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and get right with God. Then the three woes are announced, which are the fifth, sixth and seventh trumpets. These come directly upon man. The first woe is the fifth trumpet. It's a judgment of demons who sting men for five months, but do not kill men, giving them the opportunity to believe. The second woe is the sixth trumpet. It's a judgment of four demons who transform into an army of 200 million and are able to kill men, but are not permitted to hurt the earth or the 144,000. Then before the third woe is revealed in the seventh trumpet, we learn about the two witnesses who control the temple compound during the first half of the tribulation, giving worshippers the right to enter and offer animal sacrifice, which is mostly done to point to Jesus as the true sacrifice. But at the midpoint of the tribulation they will be killed by the anti-Christ who makes war with them, and their bodies will lie in the streets for three and a half days while the world celebrates, and then suddenly they will be raised from the dead and ascend and those in Jerusalem who see this will fear and a great earthquake will take place, through which many in Jerusalem will believe. It's at that time that the third woe, which is the seventh trumpet, will sound, and this is the midpoint. So the seals and trumpets in the first half, the bowls in the second half. We didn't go through the peals of thunder again, but they are revealed without explanation. We only know they were judgments John saw, and we could either cram them at the end of the first half, or put them in the second half. Honestly, I don't think anyone knows, but somewhere in there. Now when the seventh trumpet does sound we don't see anything happen on earth. All we see is a response in heaven that "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever." It's a statement that whatever is contained in the seventh trumpet will result in the kingdom of God being established. It's at the midpoint so the kingdom is not there yet, but the measures to establish it are contained in the seventh trumpet and it will be established. It is certain. Because of that heaven rejoices, because now the famous prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," is being answered. And this shows you many things, but two important ones are that the kingdom is not here in any form right now. There is no kingdom now. There is the church and the church is not a kingdom. We are sons of the kingdom and heirs of the kingdom and in preparation for the kingdom, but the kingdom cannot come until the seventh trumpet sounds. And the other important one is premillennialism. The kingdom cannot come until Jesus Christ returns. And when He does return He will bring the kingdom. That is what Rev 11:15 and 17 are all about, the answer to that famous prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." People say that prayer all the time and don't have a clue what it means. When it's answered they'll know what it means. It means that the kingdom of this world, which is led by two figures we are going to learn about in Rev 12 and 13, Satan and the anti-Christ, will have been destroyed by Jesus Christ, who will establish His own kingdom in their place. That's premillennialism.

So we are at about the midpoint when we come to Rev 12 and there is nothing about the bowls in this chapter or chapter 13 or chapter 14. They're first mentioned in chapter 15 and are poured out in chapter 16. So John was shown some other things that enhance our understanding of the players who are involved during the second half of the seventieth week. And we'll follow the same procedure as we have in previous chapters. We always ask "What does it say?" But we don't stop there. Too many just argue about what it says, rather than asking the all-important question, "Why is it here?" "Why did God reveal this information?" And you cogitate over time about why and I think the reason God revealed this chapter is to show us that behind history there is more than meets the eye. Maybe you remember the old commercial for the Transformers, those little toys that could transform from a robot to a car or an airplane and back. And they had a little slogan for Transformers, "More than meets the eye." History is like that. History is more than meets the eye. It's like there's a stage and humans can see what's on the stage, but there's a behind the stage curtain and the only way you can see behind that curtain is to have God's revelation. Chapter 12 is God's revelation of what is behind the behind the stage curtain.

What John saw was three things; in 12:1 a **woman**, in 12:3 a **dragon** and in 12:5 a **son**. We have to take a little time to go through this and identify these correctly for we are to understand many things. Herman Hoyt said, "Let every student of this great chapter realize right here that the understanding of this chapter is the key to the understanding of many things. It is the key to the correct interpretation of the Book of Revelation, of the Bible, and of history. In this chapter will be found the story of the conflict of the ages." So however you interpret this chapter is your explanation of the conflict of the ages and history. So it's very important to get this right.

Now the first and most important observation is that the first two of these, the **woman** and the **dragon**, are said to be **signs**, but the third, the **son**, is not said to be a **sign**. So that is a difference and the difference amounts to this; a **sign** in the Greek is *σημιον* and means it represents something. The **woman** is not an ordinary woman and the dragon is not an ordinary dragon, but both represent something real. The son, on the other hand, is not a sign, and so it's just ordinary language, meaning the **son** really is an ordinary male **child**.

Let's identify the **son** first by looking at verse 5. This is the easy one. **And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.** Who is the **son**? It's easy because Psalm 2:9 predicted that the Messiah would **rule all the nations with a rod of iron**. So the **son** is the Messiah.

The other two are not as easy. The first sign is 12:1 and this is the **woman**. And the location of the **sign** is **in heaven**. John is seeing into heaven. And there he saw **a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; and she was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth.** Now there's a guy on the internet named Scottie Clarke, and he has a whole video he made back in 2013 dedicated to trying to prove that the woman is the constellation Virgo, who he says is Mary, and on Sept 23, 2017, next week, the moon will be at the foot of the constellation Virgo and the sun will be right over her shoulder and the constellation Leo will be the royal crown on her head. And he says this will be the

fulfillment of Rev 12 at the midpoint of the tribulation. Some of you may have heard of these kinds of speculative theories. I just warn you not to be caught up in all of it, unless you like to be deceived and obscure. I bring it up as an example because he claimed this in 2013, saying Sept 23, 2017 would be the midpoint of the tribulation. And he believes like us that the tribulation is seven years. So in his view the tribulation had to begin around the end of March 2014. That means we are in the tribulation now and have been for almost 3 ½ yrs. Yet he also believes in the pre-trib rapture, so we were supposed to be gone long ago, but we're still here. This is all on his website and you can check it out and lots of people are following this guy. He also believes the two witnesses are in the first half of the tribulation, and he believes they are Moses and Enoch, so apparently those two guys are over in Jerusalem right now on the Temple Mount. But I went there and stood on the Temple Mount in 2015 as did many of you and we didn't see them. My point is Scottie should take his website down. Stop looking through his telescope and start reading his bible more. This kind of nonsense is sweeping into prophecy. He's one of thousands of people who are into astrological prophecy, signs in the sky, blood moons, predicting dates and all the other malarkey. They're always wrong and they always will be wrong and the main reason is because they spend more time staring into space than they do studying the Bible. What the text says in 12:1 is that John saw **a great sign in heaven**. He did not say that people living on earth at the midpoint of the tribulation would see **a great sign in heaven**. What John was given, eyes to see in the heavens, is a sign that represents what would transpire on earth.

So we still have to identify this **woman**. There are five descriptions of her. First, she is **clothed** or shrouded **with the sun**. So she appeared radiant, shining. Second, she had **the moon under her feet**. Third, she had **on her head a crown of twelve stars**. Fourth, she was pregnant **with child**. Fifth, she was about to give birth, she was **in labor** and **in pain**. Who is the **woman**? Let's see what people have concluded. First, some identify the **woman** as Mary. This is the Roman Catholic view. They conclude this is Mary because in verse 5 this woman gave birth to a son, a male child, who is obviously Jesus. And further, they argue that the language of verse 2, that **she was with child**, is similar to the prediction of the virgin birth in Isa 7:14 and the fulfillment in Matt 1:23. That's a very little view of history, but there's no question that Roman Catholicism says that history is about Mary, which you should consider strange, because it is. This interpretation is weak for three reasons. First, in verse 6 the **woman** fled into the wilderness and was nourished there for one thousand two hundred and sixty days, but Mary did not flee into the wilderness and enjoy nourishment for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. Second, the **woman** is not an ordinary woman, but a **sign**, and therefore represents something else, not an ordinary woman. Third, if the **woman** is Mary it creates a contradiction in Roman Catholic theology because in verse 17 the **woman** is said to have other **children** and Roman Catholic theology rejects that Mary had other **children**, instead teaching the perpetual virginity of Mary. So much for that view. A second interpretation is that the **woman** is God. History is about God, but it doesn't tell us anything about the plot of history. This interpretation has the great problem of how it is God would escape into the wilderness and be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days and how God would give birth to Jesus. So that won't work. A third interpretation is that

the **woman** is the one people of God in both the OT and NT, that is the **woman** is Israel and the Church. One can see how the woman could represent Israel who gave birth to Jesus, since Jesus is a Jew. But one cannot see how the woman represents the Church. The Church did not give birth to Jesus. It is Jesus who gave birth to the Church. So this is not a very good interpretation. A fourth interpretation is the best. The **woman** represents the nation Israel who gave birth to the Messiah. This is gathered from several lines of evidence. First, the picture of a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars, is reminiscent of Joseph's dream in Gen 37:9-11. In that dream Joseph said he saw the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowing down to him. His father Jacob understood that he was the sun, his mother Rachel was the moon and Joseph's eleven brothers were the eleven stars. It meant, of course, that Joseph would rise to power in Egypt and they would come and bow before him. The only difference in Rev 12 is that now there is a woman, and it stands to reason that Jacob is the sun, Rachel is the moon, the twelve stars are the twelve tribes and they gave rise to the woman, who is the nation Israel. Therefore, the **woman** represents the nation Israel. A second evidence that the woman represents Israel is the fact that God made a covenant with Israel that promised that nation a land, seed and worldwide blessing. The land promised to them is given borders in Gen 15, the seed promised to the nation would be the Messiah, the blessing promised would go to the whole world. In essence, the three aspects of the covenant promised a worldwide kingdom. We already know that the son is the Messiah, and it is very true that Israel gave birth to the Messiah, so the woman must be Israel. Third, the nation Israel plays a very prominent role in the Tribulation. In Rev 7, 144,000 are sealed, 12,000 from each of the tribes of Israel. In Rev 11:1-2 the Temple is rebuilt in Jerusalem. In Rev 11:19 the ark of the covenant is mentioned. These are all very Jewish references in the Tribulation time. Fourth, this is an adequate explanation of history. Israel is at the center of history because of the covenants God made with Israel. For many of us it is obvious that Israel is at the center of history. The world and many theologians do not have a clue why Israel is such an issue, but the very fact that they are is evidence that the destiny of that nation and the destiny of history are intertwined. So the **woman** in 12:1 is the nation Israel and this fits nicely with John 4 where Jesus says He is a Jew.

In 12:2 we learn that the **woman was with child**, meaning she was pregnant. This is a picture of the condition of the nation Israel being pregnant with the Messiah. The reason Israel could be viewed as being pregnant with the Messiah was because the promised seed was originally promised to Eve in Gen 3:15, but the promise was narrowed down to come through Abraham in Gen 17:19, then Isaac, then Jacob, who was re-named Israel. So in a very real sense the nation Israel **was with child** and that **child** was the promised seed, Messiah.

Now the timing portrayed is when **she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth**. So it is describing the circumstances of the nation Israel just before the Messiah was born. She was in the galls of labor, in pain. It's true that Israel was under the pains of Roman rule at the time of Messiah's birth. In particular they were under the rule of Herod the Great, who was a cruel and unusual tyrant who did not care for the Jews and who ruled the Jews with a heavy hand. All that to say that these events fit well with the nation Israel at the time Messiah was born.

In 12:3 John saw **another sign**, so this too is a figurative language representing something else. It also **appeared in heaven**. What was it? **A great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems**. Who is the **dragon**? This one is also easy because verse 9 tells us. **the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world**. So **the great red dragon** is Satan and we can deal with all the descriptions of him later. For now, we just need to know the **dragon** symbolizes Satan. So putting these three together; Israel, the Messiah and Satan, do we have a good picture of the true conflict of history? Of course we do. God made a covenant with only one nation on earth, Israel. This covenant promises a kingdom. The establishment of this kingdom depends upon Israel receiving her Messiah as the King. Satan wants to stop this King and His kingdom from entering into history. So he tries to kill the King and when he fails to kill the King he tries to destroy Israel so they can't request the King to return. If he is successful in either he destroys God's covenant promises and plan for history. Now that's the big picture of this chapter and of history. And we're looking right at the midpoint of the tribulation. So other details we will add in, but for now we have to deal with the rest of 12:3.

12:3 is somewhat ambiguous and very difficult. It's a description of Satan. Up to this point in Scripture, the only description similar to this is found in Daniel 7. You might turn there. That was the passage where Daniel saw the fourth beast and it had ten horns and then another little horn grew up and it pulled out three of the ten horns. At the time I said, remember this, because when we get to Revelation you'll need it. Now you need it. So let your mind's eye go back to that fourth beast. That fourth beast was the one Daniel wanted to know the exact meaning of. An angel told him that the fourth beast was a kingdom and that the ten horns were ten rulers of that kingdom and that the eleventh horn was another ruler that would arise and defeat three of the ten rulers.

Now as history unfolded and this prophecy was fulfilled, we know that the fourth beast was Rome, but these ten rulers followed by an eleventh that defeated three of the ten never came along. So we can assume there is a gap in the kingdom of Rome and that these ten and the eleventh all come after the gap and are future rulers of Rome. So is there a way to fit the imagery of the beast that pictured future Rome together with the imagery of the dragon that pictures Satan? Yes. Let's try to do that. This is advanced Bible doctrine, so if you don't have the earlier pieces you will struggle to see all of this. First, the dragon has seven heads, they signify seven kingdoms, but they have no parallel to the fourth beast. However, the fourth beast did have one head and it signified the one kingdom of Rome. Therefore, we can conclude that Rome is one of the seven heads on the dragon. But who are the other six? Well, they're all going to relate to Israel in some way. That's the key to identifying them. All seven of these kingdoms ruled over Israel. Egypt is the first head on the dragon. They ruled over Israel for 400 years. Assyria is the second head on the dragon. They defeated the northern kingdom of Israel, ten tribes, and took them into captivity. Babylon is the third head on the dragon. They defeated the southern kingdom of Judah, two tribes, and took them into captivity. Medo-Persia is the fourth head. They ruled over Israel and one evil ruler in Persia, Haman, even tried to destroy Israel. Greece is the fifth head of the dragon. They ruled over Israel and one evil ruler, a Seleucid king, Antiochus Epiphanes, also tried to destroy Israel. Ancient Rome is the

sixth head of the dragon. They ruled over Israel at the time of Messiah's birth, and one of its rulers tried to kill the Messiah at His birth. Future Rome is the seventh head of the dragon. So there are the seven heads of the dragon and they are all kingdoms of Satan that ruled over Israel and in many ways and forms tried to destroy Israel and the Messiah that Israel was to give birth to. So that deals with the **seven heads** and it is a perfect explanation of the conflict between Satan's kingdoms and Israel down through history, as well as the future conflict.

Now for the **ten horns**. The dragon also had **ten horns**. The **ten horns** has a parallel in Dan 7, where the fourth beast also had **ten horns**. Those **ten horns** represent ten rulers so it's safe to say that they represent the same ten rulers here. The only problem here in Rev 12 is we're not told where the ten horns are. So I'm having to make a guess, but in Dan 7, the ten horns were on the fourth beast, which is the seventh head, and is future Rome. But it's a good guess because in Daniel 7 the **ten horns** are on the head of the fourth beast and that head is the seventh head on the dragon, and is future Rome. I think what God is wanting us to do with this imagery is organize it, think about it, don't slip and slide or ignore it. He's wanting to know who really loves Him and who really wants to understand what He's saying. So if you don't follow all the details, go back and review this lesson and the lesson in Daniel 7. There's no slipping and sliding. This is all very careful and precise. So the ten horns are ten future rulers of Satan's seventh and final kingdom, Rome.

The last thing we see on the dragon's head in verse 3 is **seven crowns on the seven heads. We've already identified the seven heads** as the seven kingdoms that have ruled over Israel. So now we just have to figure out who the seven crowns represent. There is one crown per head. Crowns represent kingship, and here again, there is no parallel in Daniel 7, but we can gather that each of the seven crowns represents the first kings of the seven kingdoms to rule over Israel. So the first Egyptian king to rule Israel would be the Pharaoh who did not know Joseph. He's the first crown. The first Assyrian king who defeated the northern kingdom of Israel was Sennacherib. He's the second crown. The first Babylonian king who defeated the southern kingdom of Judah was Nebuchadnezzar. He's the third crown. The first Medo-Persian king who took over the rule of Judah would be Cyrus. He's the fourth crown. The first Greek king would be Alexander the Great. He's the fifth crown. The first ancient Roman king would be Julius Caesar. He's the sixth crown. The future great Roman king will be who? The anti-Christ. He's the seventh crown. So there are your seven crowns on the seven heads of the dragon. And that means that when future Rome comes you will have the ten rulers and then an eleventh ruler. He is not one of the ten horns, but he is the seventh crown, and this was very difficult to piece together, but each piece fit perfectly and it is a picture of world history, that Satan is behind the destruction of Israel and the Messiah that was promised to come forth from Israel, and that his attempts have taken place through seven kingdoms that ruled Israel, starting with Egypt, then Assyria, then Babylon, then Medo-Persia, then Greece, then ancient Rome, and when that failed, and we'll talk about how in more detail next week, verse 5 says the Messiah was caught up to God and to His throne, which is the ascension, but coming in the future will be future Rome and the seventh crown is the king of that Rome, the anti-Christ, and he will set out on the final attempt of Satan to destroy Israel so they cannot call on the Messiah to return. This is his strategy, because Satan can literally stop the coming of

Messiah in His kingdom if he destroys all the Jewish people on the planet. How can he stop it? Because Jesus said to Israel, you will not see me until you welcome me back. Matt 23:39. And Jesus is not going to violate His own word. Jesus is not just going to come back anyway. If every Israelite is dead then there are no Israelites who can call on Him. And if there are no Israelites who can call on Him then Jesus is not coming in His kingdom.

History, then truly is more than meets the eye. But if we attend to the Scriptures, we will understand history and the conflict that is raging behind the curtain behind the stage and we will understand why. Until next week.