

## BOOK OF REVELATION

### Lesson 26 - Chapter 12 Continued

We began what is essentially a new section of Revelation last week that is chapter 12; a chapter that is heavy (even predominately) reliant on symbolism. Of course that means that our job is to decode exactly what those symbols are symbolizing. Let's remember that the purpose of John's visions is not to present us with a series of mind bending riddles and mysteries that leave us (and no doubt John) confused and frustrated. The Lord is not playing a cosmic game of Wheel of Fortune with us. Rather these symbols are a means of expressing future happenings in a way that can transcend time and culture, often having no discernable meaning until the right time in history approaches. And even as these prophesied moments in history arrive and even become the past, the true understanding of these symbols is only intended for a very specific and privileged audience.

Why does God obscure Bible prophecies in symbols? Christ's answer to that question as found in Luke 8 was this:

**<sup>CJB</sup>Luke 8:10 <sup>10</sup> and he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of God; but the rest are taught in parables, so that they may look but not see, and listen but not understand."**

Any literate person can pick up a Bible and read the Book of Revelation; but only some people (Believers) are meant to comprehend it. Many of the End Times prophecies were given while the Prophets were in a foreign land that was hostile to the people of God (Daniel and Ezekiel for instance wrote while in exile in Babylon during the 6th century B.C.). God concealed the prophecies that were meant only for those who worshipped Him by cloaking them in symbols in order to protect the divine message from those who had no right to know their meaning. This is why Nebuchadnezzar had to call for a God worshipper, Daniel, to make any sense whatsoever of the night visions he was having that tormented him so.

There are movements within modern Christianity that believe that the truths of the Bible (especially those of the New Testament and even more so of the symbols of Revelation) are unique to each person who reads them. That is, what is truth to one can be a different truth when read by another. Thus what is sin for one is not necessarily sin for all. In our case that would mean that there is no one correct way to read and interpret John's Apocalypse; and no one correct understanding or application of the many symbols that are used. I categorically deny that this is the case, otherwise there is no such thing as truth, no universal standard of right and wrong, and no rightly dividing God's Word. If there are multiple truths that would also mean that the fulfillment of any biblical prophecy could happen in multiple ways simultaneously. It is self-evident that such a thing is impossible in our 4 dimensional Universe. So how are we to discern a prophetic truth or the meaning of a symbol in the Bible? We must first begin at the source. Invariably that source is the place in the Bible that is a no-go zone for too many denominations: the Old Testament where the original prophecies and their contexts

were divinely given. That said, as history unfolds time and circumstance can also help to reveal the true meaning of a prophecy or a symbol. Yet in the instance of prophecy that has still not been fulfilled by our day we must be aware that the prophecy or symbol might have more than one reasonable solution within the limited information currently available to us. And that is only because it is not yet time for its true, absolute meaning to be known. But always, whatever the true divine meaning, it is meant ONLY for God worshippers and no one else. No one else is equipped to discern and know, and no one else has the right to know, because no one else than Believers carry the Holy Spirit of God within us as our teacher.

Therefore on numerous occasions I have given, and will continue to give you more than one reasonable solution to a symbolic puzzle, but only because we don't yet have sufficient information to be certain which (if either) solution we can rely on as the correct one. Make no mistake, though: there is only ONE correct answer to what a symbol is symbolizing and to how, exactly, a prophecy is going to be fulfilled.....even if we can't quite put the pieces together at this point in history. On the other hand, history HAS progressed far enough that we can reliably know what certain symbols mean, and identify exactly when and how certain prophecies have been fulfilled long after the time that the Bible was completed and closed up.

So last week we came upon a couple of important symbols in the opening verses of chapter 12: the pregnant woman clothed in the sun with a crown of 12 stars, and the great red dragon. And, we went through a series of explanations as to how we are able to positively identify them. Briefly, the woman is Israel and the great red dragon is Satan. We can know this because the woman was well described and prophesied all the way back in Genesis 37, the story of a young Joseph explaining to his family a divine vision that he had. The identity of the great red dragon is actually very easy because while it is first spoken of in verse 3, verse 9 says exactly who he is: the ancient serpent, the Devil, the adversary, the deceiver of the whole world.

However we also got more detail about the red dragon that can be difficult to follow.

Let's re-read the first several verses of Revelation chapter 12.

### RE-READ REVELATION 12:1 - 12

In verse 3 the Devil or the spirit of the Devil is symbolized as having 7 heads and 10 horns. Let's address that aspect of the red dragon. It is most common among Christian Bible commentators to say that this is a direct reference to the 4th beast in Daniel's dream vision. In Daniel chapter 7 we read this:

**<sup>CJB</sup>Daniel 7:7 <sup>7</sup> After this, I looked in the night visions; and there before me was a fourth animal, dreadful, horrible, extremely strong, and with great iron teeth. It devoured, crushed and stamped its feet on what was left. It was different from all the animals that had gone before it, and it had ten horns.**

David Stern in his Revelation commentary says: "...its seven heads and ten horns also equate it with the 4th beast of Daniel 7:7. G.K. Beale in his Revelation commentary says: "The ten

horns are those of Daniel's fourth beast, and will reappear on the beast of chapter 13, showing that the devil performs his oppressive will against the church and the world..." But I cannot agree with these scholars. Nothing in verse 7, or in any other description of Daniel's 4th beast, say that the beast has 7 heads; only that it has ten horns. So these two commentators, along with almost all others I researched, read in to Daniel 7:7 something that is not there. They just assume that if that beast has 10 horns, then in order to get it to equate to the beast of Revelation 12:3 it must also have 7 heads. So if that is not the case, where in Old Testament prophecies do we find a beast with 7 heads and 10 horns? Answer: we don't. Yet, there is another possibility that while I cannot say for absolute certain is correct, it is the best option for us at this time. It is that when we look at earlier verses of Daniel 7 we read this:

**<sup>CJB</sup> Daniel 7:1 *In the first year of Belshatzar king of Bavel, Dani'el had a dream and visions in his head, as he was lying on his bed. He wrote the dream down, and this is his account:***

**<sup>2</sup> *"I had a vision at night; I saw there before me the four winds of the sky breaking out over the great sea, <sup>3</sup> and four huge animals came up out of the sea, each different from the others.***

**<sup>4</sup> *The first was like a lion, but it had eagle's wings. As I watched, its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted off the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a human heart was given to it.***

**<sup>5</sup> *Then there was another animal, a second one, like a bear. It raised itself up on one side, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, 'Get up, and gorge yourself with flesh!'***

**<sup>6</sup> *After this, I looked; and there was another one, like a leopard with four bird's wings on its sides. The animal also had four heads, and it was given power to rule.***

**<sup>7</sup> *After this, I looked in the night visions; and there before me was a fourth animal, dreadful, horrible, extremely strong, and with great iron teeth. It devoured, crushed and stamped its feet on what was left. It was different from all the animals that had gone before it, and it had ten horns.***

We have the 4th beast with 10 horns, but still no beast with 7 heads. We do have one beast, the 3rd, that had 4 heads but 4 isn't 7, is it? When we get to chapter 13 we get another beast and it, too, is described as having 7 heads and 10 horns, but its description goes into much more detail. But for now I'll just point this out: I think the description of the Revelation chapter 12 beast of 7 heads and 10 horns is a hybrid of all 4 beasts of Daniel 7. Here's my reasoning: beast 1 has 1 head and no horns. Beast 2 has 1 head and no horns. Beast 3 has 4 heads and no horns. Beast 4 has 1 head and 10 horns. When we add up the number of heads of Daniel's 4 beasts we get 7. When we add up the number of horns of the same 4 beasts we get 10. Thus the 7 heads and the 10 horns equals the totality of the beasts of Daniel chapter 7. Further, 7 is a number of completion and wholeness, and 10 is also a number of completion but also of universality. We'll explore this further in Revelation 13. I'm pretty comfortable with

this being the solution to the beast with 7 heads and 10 horns of Revelation 12:3, while acknowledging that it is not impossible that there could be another and better solution. However the most commonly held solution of it representing ONLY the 4th beast of Daniel 7 defies Holy Scripture.

Chapter 12:4 states that this dragon used his tail to sweep one-third of the stars out of heaven and throw them down to earth. We discussed this at length last time so I'll only summarize. This is speaking (from an earthly perspective) of both a past and future event. The past event is when Satan was hurled out of Heaven and sent to earth, and there were some number of fallen angels that followed him. This would have been at the time of Adam and Eve, when on earth Satan was first identified as the Serpent. The future event is still future to us (again, from an earthly perspective of time and space) and it connects with the battle in Heaven that is spoken of in verse 7. We'll come back to that because I prefer to keep the flow of this chapter going. So continuing verse 4 we read that the dragon, being hurled down to earth, stood in front of the pregnant woman (Israel) in order that the moment she gave birth it could kill her child the moment he was born. This is referring to the birth story of Christ, and of course we know that as soon as Herod the Great heard about the birth of a Messiah and future king of Israel, he determined to find this infant Messiah and kill him. Why does Satan want to kill the child? Because he is well aware of God's plan of salvation for the earth, and he knows that this child, the Messiah, is the cornerstone of that plan. In fact, he will eventually replace Satan as Lord of the earth. How does a mere human being accomplish this? He can't; rather this child was conceived by the Spirit of God, and so is in some incomprehensible way, God.

We can be certain this is the case because continuing in verse 5 we get a further description of this seemingly impossible paradox by which a human woman births a human child who is also God. It is that the pregnant woman will give birth to a son, a male child. Many language experts and commentators point out that this peculiar phrase "a son, a male child" is not found elsewhere in the Scriptures nor can anyone find a parallel in Greek literature. This is pretty interesting, actually.

The Greek word translated as male child or just male is **arsen**. And it indeed means the male gender. The Greek word translated as son is **huios** and it means son, or son of man. So a literal translation would give us something like "a male child son of man". This on the surface seems nonsensical or perhaps redundant. But when we understand that in the New Testament we have Hebrew thought and Jewish cultural norms being recorded in the Greek language, I think there is a solution. In Hebrew a male is an **ish** as opposed to a woman that is **ishah**. But in Hebrew a son of man is called a **ben adam**, which in English most accurately simply means human being. So literally this is saying that the pregnant woman is going to be giving birth to a son that is a human being. This is not a tribe she is producing, nor a nation; it is a person. Israel (the woman) will produce a special male human being that Satan wants immediately destroyed. That would seem odd to all but Christians. That is because Believers understand that while Mary's child would be a male human being, He is also God's Messiah and is Himself divine. Nonetheless, this divine human is exactly that: thoroughly a living, breathing, eating, flesh and blood male human being. He was born helpless and vulnerable needing his mother's milk, care, and protection just like any other infant. And yet He would be the promised deliverer of Israel. So once again we see the minor symbolism of the woman as Mary, but the major

symbolism of her as collective Israel. And while the minor symbolism of the child is that he is a human male, the major symbolism is that this is a human being that is also the divine Messiah.

To help us be clear on who this child is that is being spoken about, John includes the words "the One who will rule all the nations with a staff of iron". This is taken from Psalm 2 that was written hundreds of years before John; it is a thoroughly Messianic Psalm and the Jews of his day believed that as well.

<sup>CJB</sup> **Psalm 2:7-9** <sup>7</sup> *"I will proclaim the decree: ADONAI said to me, 'You are my son; today I became your father.* <sup>8</sup> *Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance; the whole wide world will be your possession.*

<sup>9</sup> ***You will break them with an iron rod, shatter them like a clay pot."***

Satan tried at Yeshua's birth to kill Him in order to thwart God's will, but failed. Later, when Christ was an adult, Satan tried again and thought he had succeeded: Yeshua was crucified on a cross. And yet, in reality, what appeared to be a victory for the Devil was in fact his crushing moment of defeat. His fate was sealed because through the death of His Son, God accomplished redemption for the world. Thus we are told at the end of verse 5 that the woman's child was snatched up to God and his throne. This is speaking of Christ's resurrection and then ascension to Heaven and then as He stood before His Father alive and victorious. All of these actions are in the past, even to John. But verse 6 now takes us into the future.....our own future. I spoke about this last week, but what we have here is sometimes called temporal telescoping. I prefer to think of it as a panorama from the past to the future being laid out before us. And what we have is the woman (Israel) fleeing into the desert, to a place especially prepared by God, for a period of 1260 days....3 1/2 years. And it is this place where Israel will be cared for by God for some unnamed reason, however since the subject has been the persecution of Satan and his earthly henchmen on Yeshua and on Yeshua's people then we can understand that the protection of the woman in the desert is also protection from that same evil source. In both the Old and New Testaments the desert (or the wilderness) is a place of safety, of discipline, and of waiting for the promises of God to materialize.

It was in the desert that John the Baptist was protected as he was prepared to announce the coming of the Savior. It was in the desert that the Hebrew refugees from Egypt were protected, disciplined, and waited for the promise made to Abraham that his descendants would have a land of their own to possess. But then war began.

Verse 7 explains that there was battle in Heaven. The forces of good were led by Michael and those angels loyal to him, and they fought against the dragon, Satan, and those angels loyal to him. We have here another example of the Reality of Duality. That is, what is going on in Heaven is also taking place on earth. God and those loyal to Him in Heaven are fighting against the Evil One and his soldiers in the spiritual sphere. On earth, God and those humans loyal to Him are fighting against those humans who are loyal to Satan (probably in the person of the Anti-Christ) in the physical sphere. However in a more technical sense the mention of Michael seems to indicate that this battle has mostly to do with Israel. There are some things we can gather from what we know of him in the Bible that indicates his primary duty as a

defender of Israel. His Hebrew name means "Who is like God". Jude 9 mentions him specifically as an archangel. In Daniel 12 he is called "the great prince". We also read:

**<sup>CJB</sup> Daniel 12:1 *"When that time comes, Mikha'el, the great prince who champions your people, will stand up; and there will be a time of distress unparalleled between the time they became a nation and that moment. At that time, your people will be delivered, everyone whose name is found written in the book."***

So Michael's purpose is as the champion protector and defender of Israel. And we are also told that at some point there will be a time of distress that will come upon Israel that has no historical parallel; but they will be delivered...at least those among Israel whose names are found in the book (no doubt meaning The Book of Life). This has to be connected to the woman fleeing to the desert for protection and for the great battle in Heaven that is led by Michael. Let me remind you that this is still in the future for us living today.

I'll pause for a moment to put this in the context of the most prominent current Church doctrine about the End Times (at least in the Western world): Pre-Tribulation Dispensationalism; the one popularized by Hal Lindsay, Tim LaHaye, and first created by John Darby. For them, the woman represents the Church, and therefore the child that flees to the desert for protection is the community of Believers. Some, like Beale, who agree with this doctrine modify it a bit by admitting that the woman must be Israel in some sense, but those who flee into the desert will only be those Jews who have become Believers; what today is known better as Messianic Jews. I'll say emphatically; nowhere in these passages does Israel suddenly become the Church; and nowhere are the Jewish survivors of Israel, or those who are protected in the desert, only those who have accepted their Messiah. This attitude and spin on Holy Scripture exists only to comply with the Pre-Tribulation Dispensational Church Doctrine. Much has to be read into these passages that is simply not there in order to build a defense of such a doctrine.

Verse 8 switches the scene back to the battle of good and evil going on in Heaven and continues into verse 9. I think it is strange to think of war in Heaven; a place to which we ascribe perfection, bliss, and ideal peace. And yet, it is in Heaven where Satan committed his great sin, and so in Heaven he shall face his ultimate doom. Satan and his minions lose the battle in Heaven and there was no longer a place for them there. In other words, Satan could no longer freely travel between earth and Heaven nor could the treasonous angels who sided with him. A couple of thoughts: first, it is clear that just as humans have the choice of choosing evil or good, so do the angels. They are, after all, created beings. Although we know very little about angels from the Holy Scriptures, this much we can ascertain: they had wills and they could exercise them. And just as for humans, the angels could also be corrupted by evil.

But wait; this action of Satan being deposed is supposed to be in the future; didn't this happen already long ago at or before the time of the Garden of Eden? Weren't Satan and his fallen angels expelled from Heaven at that time and sent in exile to earth? Yes and no. Apparently that was only the first step of judgment for Satan and his henchmen. We know from other biblical passages that one of the prime occupations of Satan was as an accuser of the brethren. In Job we hear of Satan still having access to Heaven.

**CJB** Job 1:6-12 <sup>6</sup> *It happened one day that the sons of God came to serve ADONAI, and among them came the Adversary. <sup>7</sup> ADONAI asked the Adversary, "Where are you coming from?" The Adversary answered ADONAI, "From roaming through the earth, wandering here and there."*

<sup>8</sup> *ADONAI asked the Adversary, "Did you notice my servant Iyov, that there's no one like him on earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and shuns evil?" <sup>9</sup> The Adversary answered ADONAI, "Is it for nothing that Iyov fears God?"*

<sup>10</sup> *You've put a protective hedge around him, his house and everything he has. You've prospered his work, and his livestock are spread out all over the land. <sup>11</sup> But if you reach out your hand and touch whatever he has, without doubt he'll curse you to your face!"*

<sup>12</sup> *ADONAI said to the Adversary, "Here! Everything he has is in your hands, except that you are not to lay a finger on his person." Then the Adversary went out from the presence of ADONAI.*

Much is said about Satan (the Adversary) in these verses and here we find him standing before God in Heaven. We find out that he wanders with full freedom around the earth because that is currently his realm.

**1 Pet. 5:8 CJB** <sup>8</sup> *Stay sober, stay alert! Your enemy, the Adversary, stalks about like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

He apparently used to have some amount of authority in Heaven such that he was given access to the throne room of Yehoveh; and Heaven was his natural home before he became proud and fell. But now we read that God puts boundaries around what Satan can and cannot do in Heaven. So in some limited but undefined way Satan is permitted, to this day, to stand before God's throne in Heaven.

There's another Old Testament passage that sheds further light on Satan's activities.

**CJB** 2 Chronicles 18:17-22

<sup>17</sup> *The king of Isra'el said to Y'hoshafat, "Didn't I tell you that he wouldn't prophesy good things about me, but bad?" <sup>18</sup> Mikhay'hu continued: "Therefore, hear the word of ADONAI. I saw ADONAI sitting on his throne with the whole army of heaven standing on his right and on his left.*

<sup>19</sup> *ADONAI asked, 'Who will entice Ach'av king of Isra'el to go up to his death at Ramot-Gil'ad?' One of them said, 'Do it this way,' and another, 'Do it that way.'*

<sup>20</sup> *Then a spirit stepped up, stood in front of ADONAI and said, 'I will entice him.' ADONAI asked, 'How?' <sup>21</sup> He answered, 'I will go and be a deceiving spirit in the mouths of all his prophets.' ADONAI said, 'You will succeed in enticing him. Go, and do it.'*

**<sup>22</sup> So now ADONAI has put a deceiving spirit in the mouths of these prophets of yours; meanwhile, ADONAI has ordained disaster for you."**

So here we have Satan described as one who is a deceiving spirit. He is before God and volunteers to put lies into the mouths of certain prophets on earth. So clearly the Devil was not completely and finally separated from God and Heaven at the time as the Garden of Eden. But sometime in the future, after a battle against Michael, Satan will be permanently banished from God's presence, as will Satan's angelic followers. This is the next step that is moving towards their final judgment. This means that from that moment forward, there will be no one to accuse the brethren before God in Heaven.

Verse 9 highlights Satan's main character and attributes.

**<sup>CJB</sup> Revelation 12:9 *The great dragon was thrown out, that ancient serpent, also known as the Devil and Satan [the Adversary], the deceiver of the whole world. He was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him.***

Satan is said to be the ancient serpent, the Devil, Satan (meaning adversary), and the deceiver. We see him in Genesis as the serpent, a figure of evil. In Greek, the word Devil is ***diabolos***, which means a false accuser. The word Satan, in Greek, is ***satanas***, which means adversary....one who opposes. In Greek the word deceive is ***planao***, and it means to lead astray. And John says that Satan led the entire world astray. No wonder he is in the process of being judged.

Where the CJB says that as a result of losing the battle Satan and his fallen angels were hurled down to earth, what it more accurately says is that they were **cast out** to earth. The idea is not that God sent them to earth; it is that they were banished and entirely cut off from Heaven and so they had to find somewhere else to reside. The only habitable physical place known is planet Earth, which Satan had been lord over for many, many centuries; so logically that is where they all went. But his time of lording over the earth is nearly done. Christ is about to return to claim the right to be Lord of the earth; God is replacing the Kingdom of Satan with the Kingdom of God. Once Christ is King, where will Satan go if he is not allowed into Heaven nor can he operate on earth? That's more or less the point of the end of Revelation; he and his fallen angels not only have no where to go, but as his final judgment his existence is going to be brought to an end. So he will go kicking and screaming, wreaking as much havoc as he can upon earth and its inhabitants, believing to the last that there must be some way to defeat God.

Indeed, as Beale sees it, Chapter 12 can be sub-titled as "The conflict of the serpent with the woman and her seed". What we have seen being played out is essentially the history of Israel and her seed, Christ, for the purpose of deliverance and redemption of Israel, versus the history of the Devil and his seed, which is death and chaos and the destruction of Israel. And it is all rather summed up in verses 10 - 12, which is a song sung by somebody in Heaven; we're not told who.

Charles Feinberg, a wonderful Bible scholar, says this about this passage: ***"In the Apocalypse when earth mourns, heaven rejoices, an indication of how out of tune with***

**heaven earth is".** An excellent observation, to my thinking.

Verse 10 begins by declaring that the Kingdom of God is no longer coming; it is here and it is in full force! It is God's victory (over Satan) and now the earth has a new lord: the Messiah Yeshua. And why is this? The verse continues by saying it is because the Accuser (Satan) has been 100% banished from Heaven; he no longer has the right to access Heaven and tattle on Believers pointing out to God our sins and faults. We must always keep in mind that while Creation was the beginning of human history, Christ's death and resurrection was its turning point even though so few humans know it or acknowledge it as such.

Verse 11 explains how Satan's defeat came about; it was because of the blood of the Lamb AND because of the faithful and courageous witness of Christ's followers even if it meant their own lives. So the manner of victory is quite different than the manner in which Michael the Archangel defeated Satan in literal combat in the Heaven. For one thing, Christ's victory took place on earth for the sake of its human inhabitants. Yet no human, no manmade religion, could ever accomplish what God has done through His Son either in substance, perfection or in manner. And while on the one hand earth ought to be rejoicing in this victory over evil, on the other hand the next verse issues a dire warning.

Verse 12 says that those who are in Heaven (spirit creatures as well as the souls of Believers) have every reason to rejoice. But, because Satan is now backed into a corner and knows his end is near, earth and the sea are going to suffer his increased wrath.

Let's end today's lesson with this prophecy about Satan's demise found in the Book of Isaiah.

<sup>CJB</sup> **Isaiah 14:7-15** <sup>7</sup> *The whole earth is at rest and quiet. They break into song.* <sup>8</sup> *The cypresses rejoice over you, with the cedars of the L'vanon- 'Now that you are laid low, no one comes to cut us down.'*

<sup>9</sup> *"Sh'ol below is stirred up to meet you when you come. It awakens for you the ghosts of the dead who were leaders on earth; it makes all the kings of the nations arise from their thrones.*

<sup>10</sup> *They all greet you with these words: 'Now you are as weak as we are, you have become like us!'* <sup>11</sup> *Your pride has been brought down to Sh'ol with the music of your lyres, under you a mattress of maggots, over you a blanket of worms.'*

<sup>12</sup> *"How did you come to fall from the heavens, morning star, son of the dawn? How did you come to be cut to the ground, conqueror of nations?*

<sup>13</sup> *You thought to yourself, 'I will scale the heavens, I will raise my throne above God's stars. I will sit on the Mount of Assembly far away in the north.'* <sup>14</sup> *I will rise past the tops of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High.'*

<sup>15</sup> *"Instead you are brought down to Sh'ol, to the uttermost depths of the pit.*

In his final moments of desperation Satan will raise his level of fury to unimaginable heights, taking it out on earth and thus those who live on earth. But then, his life clock runs out; the earth goes quiet and enters its rest; and Satan is sent to the depths of the pit and shortly into the Lake of Fire never to exist again.

We'll finish up chapter 12 and begin chapter 13 next time.