

### BOOK OF REVELATION

#### Lesson 27 - Chapters 12 and 13

We are most of the way through Revelation chapter 12, and we'll finish it up today and move into chapter 13.

In chapter 12 verses 10, 11, and 12 form a song sung at a loud volume by an unidentified being in Heaven. It is a song of victory, praise, and joy but also of warning. Although we covered this in our last lesson, I think it would be beneficial for us to re-read it and then for me to summarize it as these verses represent a pivotal moment in God's cosmic plan of redemption and restoration. We'll also take a minor detour to help me make a point.

**RE-READ REVELATION CHAPTER 12:10 - 17** (we won't read verse 18 because it more correctly belongs as the first verse of the next chapter).

As Charles Feinberg noted, this song sung in Heaven has as its central theme that Heaven and earth are completely out of harmony with one another; so while Heaven is rejoicing the earth is being pummeled by an angry Satan who knows he's been defeated and his time as the prince of the earth is over. Let's talk for a moment about why this disharmony between Heaven and earth exists.

There are a handful of questions I'm regularly asked and one of them is why I insist that Believers ought to continue to obey God's written statutes and commandments as carefully laid out in the Torah; a list of do's and don'ts that is best known as the Law of Moses. And the first thing I point out is that we have been commanded to obey them, by Our Savior, in the New Testament.

**<sup>CJB</sup>Matthew 5:17-19 <sup>17</sup> "Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. <sup>18</sup> Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah-not until everything that must happen has happened.**

**<sup>19</sup> So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.**

So The Son did not come to override His Father's commandments. Next, the title "the Law of Moses" is misleading; this is not Moses's laws. This is the Law of God, as given by God on Mt. Sinai to Moses; Moses merely listened, wrote them down, and communicated them God's people.

The following part of my answer is that most Christians (or religious Jews for that matter) would not argue that God created the Universe and the earth and everything in it; and that it is a

Universe of order and not chaos. The regular rising and setting of the sun, the recurrent changing of the phases of the moon in an exact order, the seasons that came and went, the needed rain that falls from the sky, the way that star patterns in the night sky could be identified, unchanging, generation after generation, and so much more said to the ancients that they lived in a world and cosmos of order. The only question for them was: which god or gods ordered it all?

Today, the same science that can find no place for God also finds the order of the Universe to be more exquisitely arranged than they had thought; and grudgingly admits that it is more precisely structured right down to the sub-atomic level, and therefore more predictable in some ways, than they ever imagined possible. So the third part of my reply about why we ought to obey the Law of Moses is that it was God who precisely structured and ordered a Universe and then placed mankind in it at a specific place, at a specific time, under specific circumstances. The reason that this structure and order is unchanging is because it is perfect as is, and these created but non-living objects and phenomena like the sun, the moon, the stars, and the energy and matter that pervade our Universe have no will of their own nor has God given them the authority to choose their own destinies. However mankind was given a free will and God gave us the authority to choose our paths and (at least in part) our destinies. Therefore it was necessary.....I would even say it was an obligation on God's part..... to give to mankind a guide to how we can live in harmony with the precisely structured and unchanging physical universe He created, and therefore also be in harmony with Him, the Creator of it all, in the spiritual sphere.

Allow me to give you a simple illustration. Even something as common as a new automobile comes with an owners' manual. The creators of that automobile know what they have made and how everything was put together and is intended to work. All of its parts are ordered in a careful, purposeful synchronization with one another to form a tightly structured system that does not change. But an automobile is a complex system and so that its purpose and function can be utilized properly by a human, we are given a guide so that we can learn about all its various parts and features and how we must operate them. The automobile was not built to adapt to us; we must adapt to the automobile and the purpose of that owners' manual is to show us how to do that so that we can operate with it in harmony.

Of course (people being people) you get two types of automobile owners; the type who believes that they can just intuitively know how to operate all the various features of the vehicle, and so never opens the manual and instead relies only on their intelligence. But at some point they invariably find out they have made incorrect assumptions about how some features are to work, or that there are many useful features they never knew existed, or that some features they expected aren't there. The other type of owner immediately immerses himself into the owner's manual and flips through it so as to familiarize him or herself with how this vehicle was meant to be operated. Some will study it carefully and make sure they keep it handy so when they find themselves in an unfamiliar circumstance or unsure of how to operate a feature or perhaps find themselves in some sort of emergency situation, they consult the manual.

The Law of Moses is the God worshipper's owners' manual. When we fail to consult it and

heed it, we invariably make mistakes or improperly use God's creation. There are some, especially modern Christians, who have been taught that because they love Jesus they can behave and choose instinctively and discard the owners' manual without ever having opened its pages. In fact, the owners' manual is an unnecessary burden if not altogether obsolete and wrong. And it's not that those Believers might not get some things right, and be able to operate their lives some of the time in harmony with God and His creation. But at other times, they find out too late that their assumptions and instincts were wrong and find themselves out of tune with God and His creation and often with devastating consequences.

Ever since Adam and Eve, mankind has ventured further and further away from God's laws and commands believing that we can operate any way we please in a Universe designed to operate in one way only. And for centuries the Church has largely been complicit in aiding and abetting this detour from truth. God has had a plan from the beginning to remedy this situation. Naturally His perfectly created and ordered Universe won't be changed to adapt to our human wants and demands. Rather, He is going to change us to get us into a state of harmony with Him and with His creation. And what is necessary for that to come about is the correct leadership. Thus in verse 10 we read:

**<sup>CJB</sup> Revelation 12:10 <sup>10</sup> *Then I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, "Now have come God's victory, power and kingship, and the authority of his Messiah; because the Accuser of our brothers, who accuses them day and night before God, has been thrown out!"***

Here is the moment in history, in the future, when the leadership, and thus the direction of humankind, changes forever. The present leader, Satan, who urges us to pay no attention to our owner's manual, is pushed aside and the new leader, Yeshua, God's Messiah, takes control. He will rule the earth with authority; and what will He use as the immutable standard of behavior and justice for mankind so that we can enter into harmony with God's creation? The Torah. The Law of Moses. The very standard that He said in Matthew 5 would not pass away until Heaven and earth passed away. But He also said that the Torah would remain as the standard by which all Believers will be measured, and that standard would also establish a hierarchy of Godly society in the Millennial Kingdom. And the hierarchy Yeshua announced is this: those who obey and teach that standard (the Torah and the Law) will be the greatest and those who disobey and teach against that standard will be the least. Where might we expect those to fit in the hierarchy who teach that there is no standard?

We even read in the final 8 chapters of the Book of Ezekiel how, during the reign of Christ in the Millennial Kingdom, the Temple system along with Levite priests and temple workers, an altar with sacrifices, and the requirement to make the God ordained pilgrimages to the Temple for the Biblical Feasts and so much more will be reinstated. And, we are told that Christ will rule with an iron rod; meaning no tolerance for sin and disobedience.

Verse 11 of chapter 12 (which is the 2nd stanza of the song) gives us the reason why this change of leadership occurred; it was a combination of Christ's sacrificial death on the cross and the willingness of His followers to be obedient to Him unto death... even at times as martyrs. And the outcome, says verse 12, is that there is rejoicing in Heaven because God's

plan has been fulfilled in Heaven. The Father has replaced the Evil One with His own Son. Yet, while Heaven has been rid of Satan and His followers, the earth hasn't. So the earth's woes from the Seal and Trumpet judgments are but the prelude for even worse conditions as Satan has no where else to go but earth. He is angry and is going to cause as much death and destruction to God's creation as he can with what little time he has left....perhaps even holding on to a false hope that he can still somehow escape his fate.

Moving on to verse 13, Satan is again called the dragon; and as a result of his complete and permanent banishment from Heaven he goes hunting for some payback. He decides to take his anger out on his historical victim Israel, the producer of the Messiah that has defeated him and taken his place as ruler of the earth. Obviously the woman who gave birth to the male child can NOT symbolize Mary because this is a future event for John, and not a review of the past. Thus in this case the woman alludes to the primary essence of the symbol: Israel. But is it ALL Israel who flees to the desert (from atheists to Ultra Orthodox, to Messianic) or just part? We'll talk about that shortly.

Here the Exodus motif of God spiriting Israel away on the wings of an eagle reappears, as Israel (the woman) is given eagle's wings to hurry and escape the wrath of the Evil One. In the Torah we read this:

**<sup>CJB</sup>Exodus 19:4 <sup>4</sup> 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.**

**<sup>CJB</sup>Deuteronomy 32:10-12 <sup>10</sup> "He found his people in desert country, in a howling, wasted wilderness. He protected him and cared for him, guarded him like the pupil of his eye, <sup>11</sup> like an eagle that stirs up her nest, hovers over her young, spreads out her wings, takes them and carries them as she flies. <sup>12</sup> "ADONAI alone led his people; no alien god was with him.**

So the idea of the eagle's wings is symbolic of God's way to transport His people to a place He wants them to go, but also that the eagle is able to protect those it transports. We are, of course, to take this figuratively regarding the fleeing of the woman; no actual feathered wings of an eagle are involved any more than they were during Israel's exodus from Egypt. The wilderness, the desert, is in the Bible a simultaneously literal and symbolic place of refuge and preparation. And so verse 14 explains that the woman will be nourished in the wilderness. No doubt this is yet another expression that has a dual meaning; it is meant to be taken literally and symbolically. Since Israel is going to be cared for, for a rather extended period of time then it is self evident that the people of Israel will need nourishment....food. But the Bible also refers to spiritual nourishment (as Yeshua says: man doesn't live on bread alone). Thus just as with the Exodus, when food was literally rained from the sky to physically nourish the Israelites, so was spiritual nourishment given in the form of the Torah being given to them so that they could practice it and live in harmony with God's creation during their time in the wilderness. Some type of unnamed spiritual nourishment will therefore be accomplished during the time that Israel has fled from the dragon at a safe harbor.

The time period of Israel's protection is the same as it was for the 2 witnesses to live and

prophecy: 1260 days. And yet, the time of Israel's protection was expressed not in numerical digits but rather in a mysterious prophetic phrase that originated in Daniel: "a time, times, and half a time". We can be certain that this is referring to 1260 days or 3 1/2 years because back in verse 6 this same event is spoken of, although very briefly, and the numerical timeframe is given as 1260 days. In some way or another the woman (Israel) is kept safe from the influence and reach of Satan, who is here called the serpent. So this is just a reminder for us that the dragon and the serpent are two names for the same being: Satan.

When the woman, Israel, flees and starts to get beyond Satan's reach, verses 15 and 16 say that he spews water like of river out of his mouth to sweep her away in a flood, but the land opened its mouth and swallowed up the water. This is a very difficult passage to get a handle on for correct interpretation. The bottom line isn't difficult (Satan tries to destroy Israel but God supernaturally intervenes and thwarts his evil effort). However understanding the symbolism is challenging; and there is more than one reasonable way to interpret it. This could be Satan attempting his version of the Great Flood. In the original Great Flood God destroyed the wicked while protecting the righteous. Here Satan wants to kill the righteous and preserve the wicked, and indeed it could involve an actual deluge of water. Or, the flood of water could be meant symbolically especially when we notice the interesting word play that centers on using the word "mouth". That is, while Satan spews the destructive water out of his mouth, the earth opens up its mouth (presumably at God's command) and swallows what Satan just spewed. The earth opening its mouth is, in earlier parts of the Bible, equivalent to a fissure opening up in the ground that swallowed wicked people, but also to the opening into a pit or a cave. However the mouth is also where speech and God's oracles emit from. So this could mean that the Israeli refugees are being pursued with monstrous lies....fake news... in order that wherever they tried to flee to, the government of that place (at the pressure of their citizens) wouldn't allow them to stay. So if that's the case then the water is merely symbolic of a destructive force, but it isn't actual water; rather it is slanderous speech. We just can't know at this point much beyond that.

Verse 17 explains that as a result of his failure to destroy the woman (Israel) who has fled to a protected place, in his fury Satan sets off after the rest of her children. Again, this is a difficult passage with various possibilities. There's at least a couple of difficulties here: first, exactly what part of Israel is fleeing and being protected; and second, when we're told that Satan set off to fight the rest of her children, does this mean he gave up trying to destroy the group in the desert and decided to go after a different group? Or is it still referring to the group of Israelis in the desert wilderness but it is only a remnant of them? I'll address the second question first because I think it's the most straightforward. The wording makes it clear to me (and all Bible versions agree) that Satan is frustrated over not being able to lay his hand upon the group that fled into the wilderness, and so it is self evident that he's now going after a different group that he thinks he can reach. However the first question is much harder to ascertain.

The rather standard Evangelical Christian position is that the woman represents Believers; and since the gentile church has replaced Israel (from their Replacement Theology worldview), then those who flee to the wilderness aren't Jews or even Believing Jews: they are gentile Christians....replacement Israelites. An offshoot of this doctrine that seeks to downplay the rather insulting and obvious twisting of the Scriptures in order to diminish (erase, really) the participation of Jewish Believers in Christ is that the woman fleeing into the wilderness

represents Believers who are Messianic Jews; probably those living in Israel at the time.

Rather than give you numerous possible interpretations I'll just give you mine, and I feel fairly secure in it. The woman symbolizes Israel in general; using today's situation and terminology that would be the Jewish people. And it is, in this case, the Jewish people living in Israel who are fleeing to a safe place because it speaks of only one place prepared for them, and not several for the many Diaspora Jews living in other countries around the globe most of whom live nowhere near a desert.

No doubt these Jews living in Israel are going to have some kind of warning of impending persecution; but like the Holocaust, some will heed it and some won't. So not every Jew of Israel is going to flee. We have no idea how many will go or stay. Then, after Satan finds he can't reach those Israeli Jews of all flavors that did flee, he will go after another target. When we read that he "went off to fight the rest of her children" that is supplemented by the additional words of description that say, "those who obey God's commands and bear witness to Yeshua" then clearly we are talking about Believers in Christ that Satan is now pursuing. And yet, the words "those who obey God's commands" is an intriguing modifier that is anything but a throw away phrase. I think there are few Christians today that would say they are those who "obey God's commands" because God's commands is a phrase that generally means the Law of Moses. And, to most Christians, God's commandments are seen as dead and gone, and have no place in their lives.

For sure this is a different group than the one who fled to the desert wilderness because the passage says that the dragon went off to fight the "rest" of her children. The word rest is *loipoy* in Greek and it means "the remainder". So who are these who both obey God's commandments AND bear witness to Yeshua? First, this best describes Messianic Jews and second, it also describes gentile Christians who have come to the conclusion that the Law of Moses (God's commandments) and the Torah apply to them as well. So to be clear: the group that flees and goes into the desert for refuge are Israeli Jews....a mix of Jews.....a cross section of Jewish society.... but who live in Israel. The second group, the one that the Devil goes after when he can't apprehend those Israeli Jews, are Believers in Yeshua but they are a mix of gentile and Jewish Believers who have a very specific trait in common: they obey God's commandments.....meaning they acknowledge the continuing relevance of the Torah and they do their best to follow the Law of Moses.

I readily admit that it isn't impossible that "those who obey God's commands" is another term that just means Christians in general without distinction; but then one wonders how that term would add anything to explaining that this is the group that bears witness to Christ. I find this possibility too remote and illogical to consider because indeed one can be a saved Believer and bear witness to Yeshua, but not necessarily also be one who works to obey God's commandments. In fact, this would describe probably 99% of the institutional Church today. And we know that Believers who essentially disregard the Torah can still be saved from several New Testament passages but we learn it especially from Christ's own mouth in Matthew 5:17 - 19.

Let's move on to Revelation chapter 13. Please note that we'll start with what our Bible label as

chapter 12 verse 18 because it really belongs as verse 1 of chapter 13.

### **READ REVELATION CHAPTER 12:18 - CHAPTER 13 all**

As I have stated as a foundational matter since the introduction to Revelation, John's Apocalypse is fully dependent upon Old Testament prophecies and chief among these are the Prophets Ezekiel and Daniel. This chapter especially is connected to Daniel. When we minimize or dismiss that connection and context then Revelation can be fashioned into almost any number of stories and outcomes.

It is often said in Christianity that the Devil operates primarily through deception. And one of those deceptions is to mimic the nature and character of God; we see that in action especially in chapter 13.

It can get somewhat confusing as we try to understand the identity of the dragon, and separate him from the sea beast and from the land beast. Thus to start this chapter we have the dragon standing on the seashore and he watches as the sea beast emerges from the waves (perhaps he even calls for the sea beast to emerge). What throws us is that this sea beast sounds exactly like what we read about the dragon in chapter 12. Here in 13 the beast from the sea has ten horns and seven heads. In chapter 12 there was a sign in heaven of a great red dragon that also had ten horns and seven heads. And then a little later in chapter 12 we're told that the great dragon, the serpent, the Devil and Satan are all names for the same evil being. And thus we have the dragon (Satan) standing on the seashore watching (or calling forth) as the beast, who also has 10 horns and 7 heads (exactly the same as the dragon), surfaces. The land beast (a second beast) that comes later in chapter 13 is very different from the dragon and the sea beast that are nearly identical to one another. Here's the first thing to understand; this is the Devil mimicking the close association and unity of The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That is, we speak of God...the Father. God....the Son. And God....the Holy Spirit. We acknowledge that these are separate persons (because we really can't find a better word than persons to describe them even though we know it is inadequate) and that they each can be spoken of individually and each seem to have different tasks and can manifest in different forms. Underlying it all, however, is a supernatural unity and purpose. In the end they all are God. So we need to see the dragon, the sea beast, and the land beast similarly. We have Satan....the dragon. Satan....the sea beast. And Satan....the land beast. They each can be spoken of individually and each seem to have different tasks and can manifest in different forms. There is an underlying unity among them, influenced by the same evil spirit for the same evil purposes. So in the end, they are all Satan.

The sea beast, although it has 7 heads and 10 horns (as does the dragon) does have slight differences from the dragon. For one thing, even though the sea beast wears diadems (crowns) as does the dragon, the sea beast wears its 10 crowns on its 10 horns, while the dragon wears its 7 crowns on its 7 heads. The sea beast seems to wear crowns on its horns because its heads wore blasphemous names.

Verse 2 describes something straight out of Daniel's visions. So let's go to Daniel to help us set the context. We're going to read all of Daniel chapter 7 because there are so many elements of

this chapter that find their way into Revelation chapter 13.

### **READ DANIEL CHAPTER 7 all**

So Daniel 7 helps us to understand some things about the sea beast of Revelation 13; the connection between Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 is unmistakable. Notice how both Daniel's and John's beasts arise from the sea; both are sea beasts and to my thinking are exactly the same beast. Daniel's beasts resemble a lion, a bear, and a leopard. There is also a 4th beast but it is unlike the other 3 in the sense that it cannot be compared to any known living animal; it is far more powerful, ferocious, and insatiable in its desire to do harm. And so in Revelation 13 we find John's sea beast that was like a leopard but with feet like a bear and a mouth like a lion. Essentially in Revelation 13 John's sea beast is a hybrid or perhaps composite of all 4 of Daniel's beasts. When you add up the heads and horns of all 4 of Daniel's beasts you get 7 total heads and 10 total horns; exactly the description of John's sea beast. Bottom line: Daniel's sea beast is the same as John's sea beast. And John's sea beast received its power, position, and authority from the dragon, who is a form of Satan. And since the sea beast has similar physical attributes and gets its power and authority from the dragon then the sea beast also is a form of Satan. Yet clearly since it is the dragon who dispenses power and authority, the dragon is preeminent.

I'll conclude to say that among most Christian Bible commentators who write Revelation commentaries, the dragon is figurative of Satan and the sea beast of Revelation 13 is figurative of the Anti-Christ. However other modern writers and even ancient Early Church Fathers such as Oecumenius see the sea beast NOT as the Anti-Christ but as a false prophet. Whatever conclusions we may come to please note that to this point in Revelation no such identification has been made. While the dragon is positively identified in Revelation 12 as Satan, the sea beast is not further identified, and it will be the same for the land beast when we get to that. So be aware that while it might seem as though there is fairly universal agreement within Christianity as to the identities of the sea and land beasts, there is not. And when we find such a situation both in the historical past and in the present it means we need to be wise and hold whatever conclusions that we might come to about these identities lightly.

We'll continue with Revelation chapter 13 next week.