

WHEN SATAN LOSES AGAIN

PART 4 – REVELATION 12

“And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man [child].” (Revelation 12:13).

This verse embellishes the narrative of previous verses. The retaliatory spirit of the dragon is now in evidence. Revenge drives his spirit of hatred. His prior freedom to accuse “the brethren” terminated when he was “cast down.” That occurred at the Cross, clarified in an anticipatory statement by Jesus (John 12:23-33).

“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out”
(John 12:31).

“The casting down of Satan as an accuser of the brethren in Heaven was accomplished by the great work of Christ in giving up his life. Notwithstanding Satan's persistent opposition, the plan of redemption was being carried out. Man was esteemed of sufficient value for Christ to sacrifice his life for him. Satan, knowing that the empire he had usurped would in the end be wrested from him, determined to spare no pains to destroy as many as possible of the creatures whom God had created in his image. He hated man because Christ had manifested for him such forgiving love and pity, and he now prepared to practice upon him every species of deception by which he might be lost; he pursued his course with more energy because of his own hopeless condition.”¹

“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 with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken.”²

When Satan, as prince of this world, realized that he was further restricted, his warped spirit was quickly intent on harming the woman. This “community of believers” symbolically flees to the wilderness because of Satan's evil pursuit. His spirit is now one of “revenge” against Christ's followers. This will crescendo in subsequent verses. Instead of the Cross satisfying his hatred, he realizes it guaranteed his demise.

The word for “persecuted” is *endothesan* (G). As used here, it could actually convey two meanings: ***pursuing*** or ***persecuting***. Both are apropos. They reflect the intensity of the dragon's fearful wrath.

The believing church identifies with Christ, who threw that devil down. Therefore, he and his minions attack her (e.g., Matthew 5:11, 10:22, 24:9; John 15:18-21; Acts 9:4-5, I Peter 4:14; Revelation 1:9, 14:13).

¹ White, Ellen G.; *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 3, pp. 194-195.

² White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 761.

The flight into the wilderness, described in the next verse, is the same **flight** that Jesus encouraged and predicted in His Olivet discourse (Matthew 24:15-28, Mark 13:14-23). There, Satan will use an “agent” to bring an **abomination** into God’s church. We expect this to occur shortly. Paul pointedly described this “agent:”

“Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (II Thessalonians 2:4). The imagery conveys escaping from Satan’s vengeance and escaping from an **abomination** that God detests. It has penetrated the body of believers, God’s “temple.” “Flee” to a place of safety.

“And to the woman 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, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent” (Revelation 12:14).

In 12:6 the woman fled into the wilderness to a “place” that “God had prepared.” Now we are told how she fled. God was active again by giving her “two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly.” She is not borne away by an eagle but actually given wings to fly herself.³

Being rescued by an eagle or eagles’ wings was a metaphor in Jewish culture. This apparently began with God’s words to them: *“Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself”* (Exodus 19:4). “I took you up on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself” (Deuteronomy 32:10-11). Such wings have expansive strength and can provide a rapid escape. Special power to thwart the dragon’s advances is extended to God’s true believers.

“The woman is given the two wings of the great eagle, symbolizing divine deliverance and enablement. In the Song of Moses we read of God finding Jacob in the wilderness and caring for him as an eagle that ‘stirs up its nest and hovers over its young.’ It ‘spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions’ (Deut 32:10-11; cf. Exod 19:4). Elsewhere the prophet writes that those who wait upon the Lord ‘will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles’ (Isa 40:31). The wings enable the woman to fly into the desert, **a place of spiritual refuge**. In time of persecution God protects his own.”⁴

In verse 6 she **flees**. Here she **flies**. God’s miraculous intervention preserves His church – His body of believers (cf. Psa 91:1-4). This prophecy historically occurred with Israel’s flight from Egypt; and for the new Christian church, the flight from Jerusalem as the Roman standard approached and penetrated the city. It gave to the obedient special warning to safely escape.

“Not one Christian perished in the destruction of Jerusalem. Christ had given His disciples warning, and all who believed His words watched for the promised sign. ‘When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies,’ said Jesus, ‘then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out.’ Luke 21:20, 21.... At the time of the siege, the Jews were assembled at Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, and thus the Christians throughout the land were able to

³ Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 482.

⁴ Mounce, Robert H.; *The Book of Revelation* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1977), p. 241 (emphasis added).

make their escape unmolested. Without delay they fled to a place of safety – the city of Pella, in the land of Perea, beyond Jordan.”⁵

“All who believed in the warning of Christ, escaped from the city, and not one perished when Jerusalem was overthrown. By the destruction of Jerusalem is symbolized the last great judgment of God that is to come upon the world.”⁶

Revelation 12 addresses the **final destruction** and **desolation** that is anticipated upon the rebellious world. God specifically noted that the saints were to “flee” when a **decreed abomination** surrounds, enters and then takes over the Christian community (Luke 21:20, Mark 13:14-15, Matthew 24:15-20; cf. Daniel 12:11, 11:31, 9:27). The sin that God calls an **abomination** is *bepesha* (Daniel 8:12-13), which is rebellion against His *authority, law* and *covenant*. That is summarized in the Sabbath commandment of the Decalogue.

When a decree or law is imposed, as noted in Daniel 12:11, we will know that the dragon is aggressively pursuing God’s people. It will be time to “flee” to the “mountain” or “wilderness” that God has prepared.

These “destinations” are “depicted as a place of refuge and salvation (Isa 40:3; Jer 31:2; 48:5; Ezek 34:25; Ps 55:7-8; see Talmon, “Desert Motif,” 42, 45-46). Hagar fled into the wilderness to escape the anger of Sarah (Gen 16:6-14). The Israelites escaped Egyptian bondage by fleeing into the wilderness, where they were guided by God (Deut 1:31; Ps 78:52; Jer 2:2, 6; Hos 2:16-17; Amos 2:10) and fed by him (Exod 16:32). Individuals also fled to the wilderness for refuge, including Moses (Exod 2:15) and David, to escape Saul (1 Sam 22:1-2). Elijah fled to the brook Cherith, where ravens fed him (1 Kgs 17:1-7), and later to Horeb, where he was also miraculously fed (1 Kgs 19:4-8).”⁷

As the historical application has its basis in a literal setting, the end-time meaning is structured spiritually. The “mountains” and the “wilderness” are not geographical locations within this prophecy but metaphors for a **divine refuge**. God’s people are to be *spiritually protected*.

The wilderness is also the “avenue” through which God guides His people to the promised land.⁸ As Christ was driven by the Spirit to the wilderness (Matthew 4:1), so will God’s people be led by the Spirit. As His experience was a time of temptation and tribulation, so it will be a “time of trouble” or “tribulation” for God’s people. But the final destination will be the heavenly Canaan.

“Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses” (Psalm 107:6).

Because this is a God-directed “place” for God’s people to “flee” to, He assures and promises that it will be:

⁵ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 30-31.

⁶ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, November, 5, 1889.

⁷ Aune, David E.; *52A World Biblical Commentary; Revelation 1-5* (World Books; Publisher, Dallas, Texas; 1997), vol. 2, pp. 705-706.

⁸ Beale, G. K.; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1999), p. 643.

“where she is nourished” (vs 14)

This is a symbol of “manna” being supplied in the wilderness (Exodus 16:32, Deuteronomy 8:16). The latter-day spiritual “manna” is found in Christ (John 6:31-58). This will be fulfilled in the sustaining presence of God in a dramatic outpouring of His Holy Spirit.

“But near the close of earth’s harvest, a special bestowal of spiritual grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of man. This outpouring of the Spirit is likened to the falling of the latter rain; and it is for this added power that Christians are to send their petitions to the Lord of the harvest ‘in the time of the latter rain.’ In response, ‘the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain.’ ‘He will cause to come down . . . the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain,’ Zechariah 10:1; Joel 2:23.”⁹

“It was Christ Himself who had led the Hebrews through the wilderness, and had daily fed them with the bread from heaven. That food was a type of the real bread from heaven. The life-giving Spirit, flowing from the infinite fullness of God, is the true manna. Jesus said, ‘The bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life unto the world.’ John 6:33, R. V.”¹⁰

The time period for this “wilderness experience” is only three and a half years (cf. Daniel 12:6-12).

“she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time,” (vs 14)

The expression *kairon kai kairous kai hemisy kairu* uses the key word “kairos,” meaning “season.” The combination of these “seasons” was noted to be 1260 days in verse 6. This echoes the same period given for the two witnesses to prophesy (11:3). Their “testimony” (11:7) ties with the remnant, who keep the commandments of God and have the “testimony of Jesus Christ.” This echoes the final period of earth’s history, when the gospel will go as a witness to all nations; then the end would come (Matthew 24:14).

The allusion to this witnessing as a time of tribulation is seen in Daniel 7:25, 12:6; Revelation 11:1-3, 13:5. This is designated by Daniel as the “appointed time” at the “time of the end” (Daniel 8:17, 19; 11:35).

This three-and-a-half-year period is stated to be a time of protection from “the face of the serpent (vs 14). That means that the church will be protected from deceptive wiles of the devil.”¹¹ Satan may be able to persecute and even take their lives, but they cannot be spiritually defeated!

Background of Three and a Half Years

This period is mentioned in specific terms seven times in the Bible and written originally in three languages. It is alluded to in Daniel 9 as a yet-to-be completed period, following a tarry-

⁹ White, Ellen G.; *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 55.

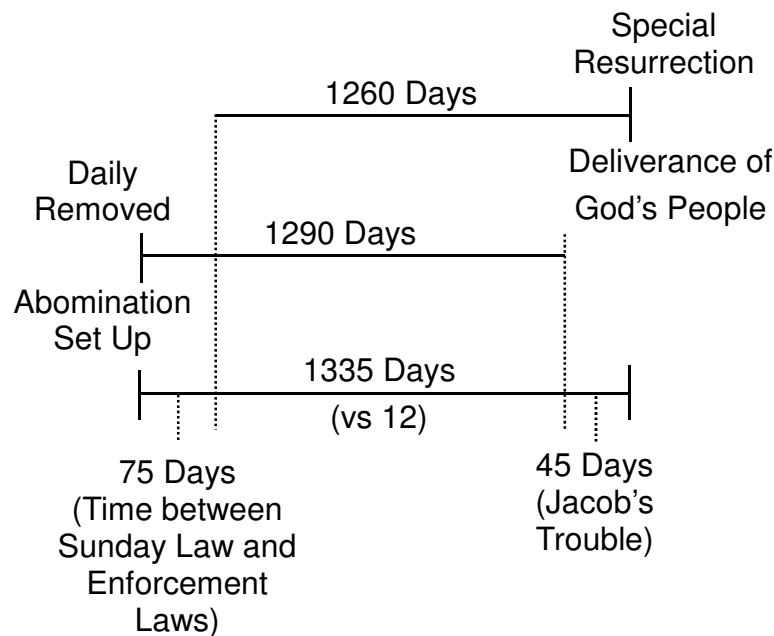
¹⁰ White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 385.

¹¹ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 483.

ing time, which then completes the 490 years. The premier prophecy that details events and timing for the three and a half years is in Daniel 12.

Though not the purpose of this narrative to review the incredible depth that Scripture actually takes us for this specific segment of time, it is expressed in distinct ways.

1. The timing expressions are message-specific (note: many of the words used by themselves often have a general meaning – but in *combination* convey a unique message).
 - 42 months – time when God’s people are persecuted
 - 1260 days – time when God’s people are witnesses
 - Time times dividing time (*iddan* – Aramaic) – literal years for the antichrist to work
 - Time times half (*moed* – Hebrew) (Daniel 12:7 – three and a half literal years, based on feast cycles). The annual Day of Atonement is in view.
 - Time times half time (*airos* – G) – three and a half years of final opportunity
 - Daniel 9 – 490 literal years, 70 Sabbatical weeks. The last half of the last week = three and a half years. Literal years to finish ending sin – then everlasting righteousness will come in.
2. Graph of Daniel 12’s three premier timing prophecies:



“And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood” (Revelation 12:15).

In Daniel 7:25 the king or “little horn,” the “another,” (cf. 8, 11, 20, 23-24) wears out the saints of the “most high” for three and a half years. The Aramaic text does not convey the implied deception as the Greek and Theodotion do.¹² The use of the word “serpent” implies that a “deceiver” (Revelation 12:9) cast the flood waters out of his mouth.

¹² Beale, G. K.; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan – 1999), p. 674.

“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matthew 24:24).

The metaphorical use of “flood waters” has several meanings related to satanic powers:

1. An army strategically spreading out to conquer (Daniel 11:10, 22, 26, 40)
2. Persecution of God’s people (II Samuel 22:5, Psalms 18:4, 16; 32:5; 46:3; 66:12; 69:1-2; 124:2-5; Isaiah 43:2)
3. Persecution with deception, alluded to from the Qumran Community (1QH 3(11) 8-12), which ties most closely with this verse (15).¹³

The serpent is trying to destroy the church through persecution, deception and false teaching. This work will be highlighted in chapters 13, 16 and 18.

“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Isaiah 43:2).

“And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.” (Revelation 12:16).

“Exodus typology is woven throughout this entire episode. The pursuit of the woman is similar to Pharaoh’s pursuit of the children of Israel as they fled from Egypt (Exod 14:8). The two wings of the great eagle that made possible her escape echo the words of God from Sinai, ‘I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself’ (Exod 19:4).”¹⁴

“The earth swallowed” the Egyptians when they pursued Israel through the Red Sea (Exodus 15:12). “Later, in the wilderness ‘the earth opened its mouth and swallowed’ the families of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, because of their rebellion.”¹⁵ (cf. Numbers 16:30, 32; Deuteronomy 11:16). “Celebrating this, it says in Psalm 106:17 that ‘the earth opened up and swallowed Dathan, it buried the company of Abiram.’”¹⁶

Though *earth* imagery often alludes to wickedness and what will eventually become a “lake of fire burning” (Revelation 19:20) and then passing away (21:1), when God chooses, it also serves His purpose. Part of the earth, the wilderness, was already “prepared of God” (12:6) to help His people. Satan’s attempts to destroy the woman would be thwarted.

The earth “swallowing up” the persecuting powers means that God’s people are **delivered**. The work of Satan has been stopped (cf. Daniel 12:1).

“And the dragon was wroth 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).

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 672.

¹⁴ Mounce, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

¹⁵ Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 675.

¹⁶ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 484.

“And the dragon was wrath with the woman,” (vs 17)

The devil was portrayed in 12:12 as “having great wrath” against the inhabitants of the earth and sea (no exclusions). Here, he is depicted as focusing his wrath on the woman – God’s last-day church.

Jesus had predicted: “*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*” (Matthew 16:18).

Christ assured Peter that the greatest of Satan’s efforts to hurt God’s kingdom would fail. Already in this narrative Satan has now experienced four major defeats.

1. When the woman’s man-child was “snatched” up to God and His throne (12:5).
2. He lost the war in heaven against Michael and his angels (12:8-12) and was cast down to earth.
3. The woman “escaped” into the wilderness, neutralizing his attempts to bring harm (12:15-16).
4. The earth swallowed up Satan’s persecuting “flood” (12:16).

Combine those losses with the sensitivity that his time is short, and his fury reaches a satanic maximum.

“and went to make war with the remnant of her seed,” (vs 17)

If the woman symbolizes the idea of a church, represented by the 144,000 (a “sign” in the sky for all to see), the seed must represent those she “brought forth,” related to the unnumbered multitude brought to Christ at the very end (7:9). As we previously discussed, there are two key groups of faithful at the apocalyptic end. This is first depicted through the two unequal horns of the “ram” in Daniel 8. That alludes to the 144,000 and the great multitude noted in Revelation 7 to be around the throne.

Why is there a switch of Satan’s “warring wrath” from the “woman” to the “remnant of her seed?” The failure of causing the “ideal church” – the 144,000 – to fall suggests that her “offspring” would now be the most vulnerable. Historically, Satan failed with the first “offspring” – the male Child. Now, in his last desperate venture, he tries to deal with the second “offspring” (the seed) – depicted as a group – the remnant.

Later, the bride of Christ is shown as the entire multitude of the saved (19:7-9). Zion then is a symbol of God’s people, echoed in Isaiah:

“Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children” (Isaiah 66:7-8).

“And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there.... They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they [are] the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them” (Isaiah 65:9, 23).

“For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain” (Isaiah 66:22).

There, the singular “male” with plural “children” and collective seed, all alluding to the same offspring from Zion, is virtually identical to this phenomenon in Revelation 12, where a woman bears a male, yet is shown as having plural seed.¹⁷

“As we near the close of time, Satan comes down with great power, knowing that his time is short. Especially will his power be exercised upon the remnant. He will war against them, and seek to divide and scatter them, that they may grow weak and be overthrown. The people of God should move understandingly, and should be united in their efforts. They should be of the same mind, of the same judgment; then their efforts will not be scattered, but will tell forcibly in the upbuilding of the cause of present truth. Order must be observed, and there must be union in maintaining order, or Satan will take the advantage.”¹⁸

“Satan hopes to involve the remnant people of God in the general ruin that is coming upon the earth. As the coming of Christ draws nigh, he will be more determined and decisive in his efforts to overthrow them.”¹⁹

“He will turn his forces against those who are loyal to God, but though he may cause pain, distress, and human agony, he cannot defile the soul. He may cause affliction to the people of God as he did to Christ, but he cannot cause one of Christ’s little ones to perish. The people of God in these last days must expect to enter into the thick of the conflict.”²⁰

“Zechariah’s vision of Joshua and the Angel applies with peculiar force to the experience of God’s people in the closing up of the great day of atonement. The remnant church will be brought into great trial and distress. Those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus will feel the ire of the dragon and his hosts. Satan numbers the world as his subjects, he has gained control of the apostate churches; but here is a little company that are resisting his supremacy. If he could blot them from the earth, his triumph would be complete. As he influenced the heathen nations to destroy Israel, so in the near future he will stir up the wicked powers of earth to destroy the people of God. All will be required to render obedience to human edicts in violation of the divine law. Those who will be true to God and to duty will be menaced, denounced, and proscribed. They will ‘be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends.’”²¹

We are not left in the dark as to who this remnant is!

“which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (vs 17)

¹⁷ Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 677.

¹⁸ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 210.

¹⁹ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 295-296.

²⁰ White, Ellen G.; *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1153.

²¹ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 472-473.

The phrase “which who keep the commandments of God” is repeated of God’s saints in 14:12. ***These words function to link the remnant or the saints to God.*** This also occurs in the discourse related to the “rich young ruler” (Matthew 19:17; cf. I John 2:3-4; 3:22, 24; 5:3).²²

In early Christianity, particularly in dialogue with Judaism, the phrase “keep the commandments of God” did “have a very particular meaning, [distinguishing between] the ethical as opposed to the ceremonial commands.”²³ The Decalogue is clearly in view. This fulfills the descriptive command of I John 5:3, where God’s love is expressed through our obedience to these commands.

“and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (vs 17)

This phrase has been a problem to many scholars who often identify it as “intentionally ambiguous.”²⁴ Yet, the meaning of this phrase is later defined in 19:10: “*And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus.*”

There, “*testimony of Jesus*” **is** called the “*spirit of prophecy.*” It refers to a **specific testimony** borne by Jesus. This has distinct associations elsewhere in Revelation.

1. The “Revelation of Jesus Christ,” which God gave to Him, is called the “word of God” and the “testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:1-2).
2. The martyrs were killed for the “word of God, and for the testimony which they held” (Revelation 6:9).
3. John saw those “beheaded” for the witness of Jesus and this Word of God (Revelation 20:4).

Contextually, the whole book of Revelation is the “Testimony of Jesus” and His “Revelation.” This represents the Spirit of Prophecy of an apocalyptic magnitude. Within this frame of understanding, John notes in Revelation 1:4-5 greetings that come from the Godhead, including: “Grace be to unto you, and peace from ... the seven Spirits which are before his throne.”

The “Spirit of prophecy” links us to the first part of chapter 1. Yet, we are also introduced to the pivotal message from Christ when He noted repeatedly that “*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*” (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:13, 22). The broad introductory narrative reveals a prophetic message that originates from the heavenly trinity.

The **remnant**, therefore, are obedient to God’s moral law and testify to the prophetic word noted in Revelation.

(concluded)

Franklin S. Fowler, Jr., M.D.
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²² Aune, David E.; *52A World Biblical Commentary; Revelation 1-5* (World Books; Publisher, Dallas, Texas – 1997), p. 709.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 710.

²⁴ Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 679.