

Week of Meetings-05 John Reviews the Great Tribulation

by Dwight Pentecost

The sermon explores the significance of the seventh trumpet, the second advent of Christ, and the resurrection and judgment of believers in the millennial kingdom.

Duration: 54:27

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 5:26-28, Revelation 10:11, Revelation 11:18

Topics: "End Times", "Gods Judgment"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the events described in the eleventh chapter of the book of Revelation. He explains that during the time of judgment, God sends two prophets to call the people of Israel to repentance and warn them of the coming judge. The speaker also introduces the imagery of a pregnant woman clothed in the glory of God, standing on the moon with a crown of twelve stars. He interprets this imagery as representing the nation of Israel and its role in God's plan. The sermon concludes with a discussion of the structure of the administration in Jesus Christ's earthly kingdom, with references to parables and the roles of David and the apostles.

Transcript

Our Father, we are so grateful that you have seen fit to take us into your confidence as your friends and reveal to us that plan and program that you have laid out that will eventuate in the reign of the one who will bear the name of King of Kings and Lord of Lords. As we look out on a world that is in conflict and turmoil, chaos and change, we are thankful that we have a God who knows the end from the beginning, who is working all things according to the counsel of his own will, that one day peace might rule and righteousness might cover this earth as the waters cover the sea. As we look into a portion of your word, we pray that the Spirit of God shall instruct us in what is written, that we might know the scriptures and that the scriptures might possess us and control us in all of our conduct.

We pray this for your glory in Jesus' name. Amen. We're taking up our study tonight in the eleventh chapter of the book of the Revelation.

We looked last time in chapters 10 and the first 14 verses of chapter 11, in which John is recording for us events in the parenthesis between the sixth and the seventh trumpet. We pointed out before, you will recall, that in the parenthesis that interrupts a program of judgment, God is revealing what he is doing in

grace at the same time that the judgments are unfolding. And the principal thing we would point out from chapter 11 is that while these awesome judgments that cover the last three and a half years of the tribulation period are unfolding, God is sending two prophets to his people Israel to call them to repentance the same way John the Baptist called his generation to repentance, and forewarning them of the approach, the advent of the judge.

As a result of this, many in the nation Israel will turn in faith to Jesus Christ and will be awaiting his coming. Now when we come to 11 15, we have the blowing of the seventh trumpet, which is the climax of this series of judgments revealed through the blowing of trumpets. And what we find in verse 15 is that this seventh trumpet, or the final judgment in this series, is the second advent of Jesus Christ back to this earth, at which time, according to Zechariah 14.4, his feet will touch down on the Mount of Olives.

Now this surprises many people when I share this with them, because if we think of the coming of Christ in relationship to the church, how do we think of it? Well, what I'm thinking of that Paul writes in Titus is called a comforting hope, or, I'm sorry, a blessed hope. In 1 Thessalonians 4, he refers to it as the comforting hope. In 1 John 3, 3 and 4, it's a purifying hope.

Those are all associated with blessings, but when Christ comes back to the earth the second time, he comes not first of all as the blesser, but as the judge. So that as awesome and awful as the judgments under the blowing of the trumpets were, the severest of all the judgments is the appearance of Christ, because the world is going to be brought under judgment by the returning King. Now, what we have here in verses 16 to 19 is a telescopic view of the prophetic program.

John will record for us events that follow the second advent of Christ that will involve the world and become a part of God's prophetic program. Now, let me just say that many of the things from verse 15 to verse 19 will be explained in detail later in the book. That's why I say John is just telescoping and surveying major events that he will develop in detail later.

So we have the second advent with the blowing of the seventh trumpet, and then verse 15. The first thing that happens is that the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever. Christ is coming back to this earth the second time to establish the kingdom that God promised to David in 2 Samuel 7.16. Remember, God said that one of David's sons would sit on David's throne and rule over David's kingdom.

This is the kingdom and the king that Israel had been waiting for throughout the Old Testament. Now, how can Christ set up a kingdom here on this earth? When Christ returns, this earth is ruled by kings and kingdoms that are all in open rebellion against Jesus Christ. The only way that Jesus Christ can set up a kingdom is to subjugate those kings and those kingdoms to himself.

Now, this was anticipated in the Old Testament. I'd go back to Psalm 2, and God said to the son there in verse 6 that he was going to set his king upon his holy hill of Zion. Then he said that that king would smite the nations with the rod of his mouth and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

That's a graphic description of subjugating nations to the authority of Christ. Or some of you went with us through Daniel's prophecy, and you remember in Daniel chapter 2, Daniel interpreted to Nebuchadnezzar the vision, the dream that Nebuchadnezzar had of this great image with four different parts represented by four metals. The head of gold represented Babylon.

The shoulders of silver represented Medo-Persia. The belly and thighs of bronze represented Greece. The legs of iron represented Rome.

Those were four empires that would subjugate the people and the land of Israel to their authority so that Israel would not exist as an independent nation under their own king. Christ referred to that extended period that has already lasted 2,500 years as the times of the Gentiles. But then the significant, or the most significant part, of Nebuchadnezzar's dream was that Nebuchadnezzar saw stone cut out of the mountain without human hands, and it hit that image and reduced the image to dust, and the wind came and blew the dust away.

And then that stone began to grow and grow and grow until it became, as Daniel interprets, a great kingdom that dominated the whole world. Now, what did that dream of Nebuchadnezzar tell us? That before Jesus Christ could set up his kingdom in fulfillment of God's promises and covenants, he had to subjugate all the nations of the earth to himself. Now, you see, it's that whole line of prophecy that's gathered together in this one statement.

The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. They become his by subjugating them to his authority as a demonstration of his power. I'm reminded that during the course of Christ's earthly ministry, the great majority of his miracles were performed in the demonic realm, delivering men who may have been blinded by demons, or deafened by demons, or made dumb by demons, or made sick by demons.

And that's significant, because if Jesus Christ is to set up his kingdom, he will have to defeat and conquer or control the king who ruled over the nation. And every miracle in the demonic realm is a demonstration that Christ has greater power and authority than Satan, and he can subdue Satan's kingdom and all of those kings who are a part of Satan's kingdom to himself so that he can rule as king of kings and Lord of lords. Now, that title doesn't come up until chapter 19, but it's anticipating that time when prophecy will be fulfilled and the nations are subjugated to the authority of Christ.

Now, we're going to see when we get on later in the book how Christ is going to do this, because they're going to be great military movements in what we refer to from chapter 16 as the campaign of Armageddon. And we're going to have Russia on one hand, we're going to have the European nations that united together on the other hand, we're going to have the Arab nations also, then we're going to have the oriental powers all congregating there in the Middle East, and their purpose is to present the return of Jesus Christ back to this earth as though all organized humanity had greater power than Jesus Christ has. And the Lord Jesus Christ, and it'll be described in chapter 19, is just going to speak a word and all those mighty armies are consumed away.

You see, it's part of the program of subduing all things to the authority of Christ so that he can rule in peace and righteousness over all of creation. What I want you to see in that one statement, we have a large body of prophecy that goes way, way back into the Old Testament brought to bear, and it's just a simple statement. He is going to subdue all things to himself.

The second thing that verse 15 says is that he shall reign. He will actually exercise the authority of a king, and then I'm dropping down in verse 18. The nations were angry, but thy wrath is come, and that's looking back to verse 15, smiting the nations.

You could put Psalm 2 verse 1. Why do the nations rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth had taken counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, we will not have this man to reign over us. That is a repudiation of God's right to have anything to do with the affairs of man. If I could make just a little aside, that seems to be the philosophy of our supreme court that says we've got to so separate God from from the state that you can't have anything to do that looks like religion in politics or in school.

That's a separation of church and state. Let me say to you that idea is a devilish concept. When you separate God from daily life, you inevitably lead to lawlessness and anarchy and rebellion.

But the nations are declaring themselves independent of God, and God says, I'm not going to let that go by. You see, God can get angry. Now, there is sinful anger, but there is also, well, let me put it this way.

There are times when not to get angry is sinful, and for God not to respond to rebellion and repudiation of his right to rule would be a violation of God's holiness and God's justice. So that when Jesus Christ comes, he isn't coming as the meek and gentle Jesus, as the my lamb. He's coming in wrath to judge those who have repudiated his right to rule.

And I'm putting verse 18 along with verse 15, the time of thy wrath has come. Then another thing, the time of the dead that they should be judged. Now, I take it that the dead here is a reference to the believers during the tribulation period who will be martyred for their faith.

We'll get into this in chapter 13, and later, when Antichrist is controlling the economy, one who does not submit to his authority will not be able to buy or sell. There will be an active attempt to kill every believer by Antichrist, who is Satan's representative. But those martyrs are to be resurrected, and I'm looking ahead into chapter 20, and it says there in verse 4, I saw thrones, and they sat upon them.

Judgment was given unto them, and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither received his mark upon their foreheads or in their head, and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The end of verse 5. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in this first resurrection.

Now, it's that whole doctrine of resurrection that will be brought to its fulfillment in verse 18 of chapter 11. When Jesus Christ comes, he's coming to resurrect. Now, I would remind you that those who have died in Christ of this church age had been resurrected some seven years previously at the time of the rapture.

But at the rapture, Old Testament saints are not resurrected. They're still in their graves. But at the second advent of Christ, there are two parts of the resurrection program.

First, there's the resurrection of all the Old Testament saints, and when Christ's feet touch down on the Mount of Olives, those Old Testament saints, no matter where their bodies return to dust, will be resurrected. This so gripped the thinking of Israel that throughout the Old Testament and through subsequent ages, it was the goal of Judah being buried as close to Jerusalem as possible. And that's why, when you take your trip over there to stand on the Mount of Olives and look across to Jerusalem, you're looking across a vast, vast cemetery, because they wanted to be buried there because they thought when the Lord's feet touched down on the Mount of Olives, the resurrection will be just like dropping a stone into a mill pond.

There will be extending circles. So, the first ones to be resurrected will be those on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, and then those in Jerusalem, and then those someplace in Palestine, and then those someplace else. But they had this idea that resurrection of the believers from the Old Testament took place at the time that Christ's feet touched down on the Mount of Olives.

But then there's the second part of the resurrection at this time, and that's the resurrection of all those who were martyred for their faith in Christ, all the believers of the tribulation period who died. That's going to be a vast resurrection. Now, you see, the Old Testament saints were promised they would have part in Messiah's kingdom, and Abraham looked forward to that.

All the Old Testament saints knew that when Messiah set up his kingdom, they would be in it. They couldn't explain it because the details weren't given, but that was their hope. And what verse 18 of chapter 11 is telling us? That that hope will be realized when the Lord Jesus Christ comes.

He will subdue nations to himself, he will pour out his anger upon those nations that are rebelling against himself, he will set up his throne and institute his reign, and he'll speak a word. And all these Old Testament saints and tribulation saints will be resurrected to share with him in the glory of his kingdom. Remember, in John chapter 5, verses 26, 27, and 28, Christ said two spheres of authority were given to him by his Father.

First, the right to resurrect, and second, the right to judge. And here at the second advent, he's doing both of those things. He's judging wicked, and he's also resurrecting believers.

Now, along with that, all of those who are called God's servants, the prophets, the saints, will be given a reward. Now, my mind goes back to our Lord's teaching. In his parables, he told of an individual who distributed his wealth among his servants, and he gave one ten talents, another five talents, another one talent.

And the one who was faithful with the ten talents, the Lord said, Well done, enter and enjoy thy Lord. You've been faithful, and now you have authority over ten cities. The one that had been given five and was faithful was given authority over five cities.

You see, this is dealing something with the structure of the administration of the government in our Lord's earthly kingdom. He'll be the king. David is called the prince over Israel, and under David the twelve apostles will have subordinate positions under David, ruling over the twelve tribes.

Then under each one of the apostles and any one of the tribes, there'll be rulers over ten cities and rulers over five cities. Do you get the idea of delegated authority? Well, that's what I see here in verse 18, that the servants, the prophets, the saints, those that fear thy name will have a reward, and those rewards will be positions of authority to rule with him when he sets up his earthly kingdom. Now, it's amazing to me how much John telescopes into these few verses, of gathering together the whole prophetic program.

But, as I said, it's going to be explained to us in considerable detail in subsequent chapters as we go on through this book. This is just a little thumbnail sketch as to what will happen at the second advent. Now I'd rather go into chapter 12, and I want to take you back to chapter 10 and verse 11 to remind you that John was told as he came to the conclusion of these judgments that spanned the seven years of the tribulation period, thou must prophesy again.

And I'm reading it this way, thou must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings. The second advent brings us to the end of the seven years of tribulation period. After the end of the tribulation period, our Lord's earthly millennial reign will be introduced, so that we might have expected a description of the millennial kingdom in chapter 12.

Chronologically, that would fit. But we don't get a description of the millennial kingdom, the throne set up, until we come to chapter 20, so that there is a lot of material from chapter 12 through chapter 19. Why is it there? You will notice that John is not trying to give us a chronology of prophecy, but what 10.11 tells us is that John must go back and cover the seven years of the tribulation period a second time from a different viewpoint.

We pointed this out last time, but I am emphasizing it again because the rain and flu and perhaps overeating or some other things kept some of you away last time. But 10.11 is crucial in understanding how this book fits together, so that from chapter 12 through chapter 19, we're going to have a description of some of the principal actors and movements that play a significant role during the years of the tribulation period. So, we're not looking primarily for judgments as we go through the second time.

We're looking for individuals, actors, movements, nations that play a significant role. Now, we're introduced to the first actress in 12.1 and 2, and I have to use the feminine rather than the masculine, because John saw a woman, a woman that is pregnant, and the time of her delivery has come. He gives us a description of this woman.

It looks as though she is clothed with the sun. In other words, she is seen reflecting the Shekinah, the glory of God. You go back to chapter 1 of Revelation, Rezekiel chapter 1, where the glory of God is described and it's described as being a brightness greater than the brightness of the noonday sun.

That's what Saul of Tarsus saw on the Damascus road, you'll remember. It's what Stephen saw when he looked up into heaven and saw the glory of God in Acts chapter 7. Now, this woman is robed in light, and is seen in dazzling brilliance. Now, she is standing on the moon, and around her head a crown of 12 stars.

So, I want you to get the imagery here. This woman standing on the moon, and the circle of stars around her head, and she is suffering labor pain, traveling in birth, pained to be delivered. Now, I want to drop down to verse 5, because the pregnancy is terminated.

It says, "...a woman brought forth a man-child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron." Now, that phrase gives us a clue as to the identity of the child, because that is a direct quotation from Psalm 2 that we referred to a few minutes earlier, where God the Father said to God the Son, "...you will rule all nations with a rod of iron." Now, to no one else was the right to rule over all nations ever given. Jesus Christ holds that right exclusively, so there can be no question as to the identity of the child. It has to be the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, then that takes us back to verse 1 and 2. Who is the woman? Who is the woman? I'm hearing some people say Israel. Why don't you say Mary? Wasn't she the mother of Jesus? Remember in one of my earlier visits to Mexico for ministry, when my brother was there as a missionary, we were next to a city, he said, I want to take you to the church. He said, as you look at that altar, I think you'll get a better concept of Roman doctrine than any book that you can read.

So, he took me into a very old part of the city, and took me into this old, old building, but there was an altar that was overlaid with gold, as was true in so many of the churches in that old country. But there was a painting, and it was a very large representation of the sun, it was this golden orb with all the flames leaping out, so you could tell it was the representation of the sun, and Mary was painted in the center of that sun. Then she was standing on the moon, and the face of Jesus Christ was painted on the moon.

Then there were 12 stars around her head, and a portrait of each one of the 12 apostles painted into those stars. So, that was teaching visually that Mary is preeminent, Christ is subject to her authority, and the apostles were bowing down to do her will. Now, they get that right out of chapter 12 of the book of the Revelation, and relate this to Mary.

However, the things that happened to this woman never happened to Mary, so that Mary cannot be the one that is portrayed in this symbolism. Rather than referring to this as the mother who conceived and bore Christ, it is a reference to the nation from which Christ came according to the flesh. And as Matthew chapter 1 verse 1 says, he was of the seed of Abraham, the seed of David.

Or, the woman here is a symbolism for the nation in which Christ came, and through which Christ came. Now, that will introduce us to the second person, and that's in verse 3. And the one presented to us here is represented as a great red dragon, having seven heads, ten horns, seven crowns upon his head. These heads and horns and crowns, we shall see from chapter 13, represent authority, political authority, or the right to rule that is assumed by the one that is presented as having these heads and these crowns.

He's likened to a great red dragon. Now, the influence of this one goes beyond just the earth, because his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, so that he has an influence into heaven itself. Now, through the Old Testament, angels are often referred to as stars.

Job will say at the time of creation of this earth, the morning stars sang together. The stars don't sing, but if you see that in the scripture the stars are viewed as residents of the angels, then the angels can sing and worship God as they see God's power displayed in creation. Well, this is going back, I believe, to what is given to us in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, where before the formation of this earth, when the only creation that existed was the angelic creation, the hives of the created angelic beings who had the name Lucifer, that means the light bearer, rebelled against God, refused to submit to God's authority.

He wanted to elevate himself above God and elevate his throne above the throne of God, so that God took orders from him. And a multitude of created angelic beings followed him in his rebellion and gave to Lucifer the right to rule that belongs to God. Now, I think that verse 4 in Revelation 12 gives us a clue as to the extent of this original rebellion.

It involved one-third of the innumerable created angelic hosts. So, here is an individual represented by a dragon who extended his authority into the heavens and led a third of the angelic creation after himself. Now, this individual seeks to extend his authority over all the earth because he attacks the woman and the man-child, and his purpose is to destroy the man-child.

Not the woman, but the man-child. Now, why the special attack against the man-child? Because he is the one who has been given the right to rule, and if he can subjugate the man-child to himself, then he has taken over the authority that God has assigned to her child. So, the attack is against the dragon.

Verse 4, "...stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered to devour her child as soon as it was born." Now, you will see this is looking back in history. When did Satan make an attack against Christ? At the time of his birth, through Herod. Herod sent out the edict to kill all the bait.

Why that? Who originated that idea? Satan did. What was the purpose? To prevent Christ from coming to rule, because he knew that if Christ ruled, then Christ would execute judgment upon him and his angels, and he would have to give up the authority that Adam had given to him. He'd have to surrender his right to rule.

So, who is this red dragon? Well, drop down to verse 9, and we're not left to any speculation, because we're told, "...the great dragon is that old serpent," that's whole world. He deceived the world in the Garden of Eden, and he has operated as a deceiver down through the ages. His deception, as referred to here in chapter 12, is that if the world will follow him, he will set up a kingdom, peace and righteousness and prosperity and plenty, and they won't have to submit to God in order to get the benefits of his rule.

Just submit to him. So we have Israel, the first actor. We have Christ, the man-child, the second actor.

We have Satan, the third actor. Well, let's back up a little bit to verse 5. When the man-child was born, who was to rule all nations but out of iron, her child was caught up unto God and to his throne. Going back in history, what's referred to in that statement? The ascension.

At the cross, it looked as though Satan had brought Jesus into subjection to himself. He had exerted his will on Christ. What's the resurrection and the ascension say? Well, Christ can say, "...all power is given unto me, both in heaven and in earth." The resurrection of Christ is the demonstration, the announcement of Christ's victory over the rebel, the deceiver, the liar, the one who has usurped the right to rule, but whose rule will be terminated.

Okay, what next? Verse 6. The woman fled into the wilderness. Well, what's all this? Since Satan could not defeat Christ and attack Christ, he seeks to defeat the program of God by attacking the people over whom Christ will rule. Let me say that again, so I make sure you get it.

Since Satan cannot attack Christ, since he's the right hand of the Father, he attacks that nation, that people, over whom Christ will rule when he returns to the earth a second time. See, here's Satan's philosophy, that if I can't keep Christ in bondage to death, I will try to kill every descendant of Abraham, for if there are no Jews alive, Christ promised to regather the nation and defeat their enemies and bring them peace and blessing can never come to fulfillment. So that what we refer to as anti-Semitism is more than an ethnic conflict, it is the outworking of Satan's attempt to continue his rule on this earth by eliminating those who will be the subject of Christ's rule and Christ's reign when he returns.

So he's going to describe here the attack of Satan against the people of Israel, but in verse 7 we find that God sends angelic hosts to defend Israel. War in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon.

The dragon fought and his angels against Michael, but the dragon and his angels were not able to prevail against Michael. In the Old Testament, one of the favorite names for God was Jehovah Sabaoth. How's your Hebrew? Do you know what that means? Yeah? Lord of hosts? Or I would expand it a little bit more.

You're right, but I put it this way to make it a little more graphic. He's the Lord of the armies of heaven. When God wanted to protect Israel, when the Assyrians were coming and they came with an army of

185,000 men, how many legions of angels did God send to protect Jerusalem? He just sent one angel.

One angel could take care of 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. God is Lord of the armies of heaven, and what I see here is that all of the power of heaven is dispatched to preserve and protect the people of the covenant, so that Satan's purpose to exterminate them can never come to fulfillment. Verse 10.

As a result of God's protection, the announcement can be made, Now has come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ. For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before God day and night. Think the best illustration of this is to go back to the first chapter of the book of Job.

Nobody could find a flaw in Job's character or conduct, but that didn't keep Satan from coming to accuse Job into the presence of God. He was the accuser of the brethren. 1 John 2, 1-2, that while any man is sinning, we have an advocate, and that's the Old English word for what we refer to today as a defense attorney.

While any man is sinning, we have a defense attorney, and that defense attorney is none other than Jesus Christ the righteous. Now, while we are sinning, why do we need a defense attorney? Because there's a prosecuting attorney who's charging us before God. Who's the prosecuting attorney? Satan.

And he points out to what I'm doing. He says, God, look at that one that you said was your child. Look at what he's doing.

Now, God, you said the soul that sin of it shall die, that the wages of sin is death, and I demand you turn him over to me. You see, that's when I need a defense attorney, because Satan is the accuser of the brethren, and my defense attorney is none other than Jesus Christ the righteous, and he comes to my defense. Now, that's just a little part of this concept that Satan has called him the accuser of our brethren.

But when John writes that in verse 10, he is looking not at Satan accusing believers of this present day, the presence of God, he's looking at Satan accusing the people of Israel of their infidelity, their apostasy, their idolatry. And so he is saying to God, God, how can you fulfill your covenants and promises? How can you send a Messiah to a people as godless and as lawless and as unbelieving as that? And you see, that is a valid accusation, because the nation is not in faith. They are in unbelief, and Israel is going to need a defense attorney.

And that brings us to the defense attorney, and that's in verse 11. Verse 11. The nation that is being accused of being unworthy of God's blessings overcomes the accuser how? By the blood of the Lamb.

What's their plea? Lord, we admit we're not worthy, but we base our acceptance on the fact that Jesus Christ died for us. And that is enough to silence the accusation that the accuser makes. Now, the response of Satan, verse 12.

Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea, for the devil has come down unto you having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. Satan's whole program must be fulfilled within the seven years of the tribulation period. If he is to defeat the Messiah, if he is to exterminate Israel, it will have to be done in that span of seven years.

I think this outpouring of the wrath of Satan begins in the middle of the tribulation period and stretches over the last three and a half years, and what we have in verse 13-17 is the wrath of Satan against the

nation Israel. When the dragon saw that he was cast into the earth, he persecuted the woman. Now, earlier we noted that he had tried to devour the man-child, but the man-child is in heaven and can't be touched.

But God's program is to be fulfilled through the nation Israel, and so Israel will undergo the most severe persecution that they have ever known in all their history. Now, it's almost painful for me to say that when we think back as to what Israel has suffered in the past, but we find that in the tribulation period all of the wrath of Satan will be vented against that nation, but God provides deliverance. The woman will be given two wings of a great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is protected for time, times and half-times.

Time is one, times is three, plus one is three, adds that to the half, and that's why I say I take it that this is in the middle of the seven years of the tribulation period, where the last three and a half years will be the period of Satan's reign. Now, there's been a lot of speculation on where the woman is going, and a lot of people believe that Israel is going to flee to that place down in southern Jordan known as Petra, that rock city that is the area from which Herod came. Now, somebody told me once he was so convinced that the Jews were going to flee down there that he was arranging to have copies of Things to Come hidden in those caves so that when the Jews got down there, they would read of the whole prophetic program and would understand what was happening.

I told him, save his money. The wilderness in the Old Testament is often used as a reference to Gentiles or Gentile nations, and for this reason. God had said he would pour out showers of blessing upon his people.

You never sing it anymore, do you? But you used to sing, there shall be showers of blessing. Well, the showers were the symbol for God's blessing. Those showers were to be poured out upon Jerusalem so that Jerusalem would get the showers of the rain, and the further you got from Jerusalem, the less rain, less blessing.

And the concept was that if you were in Jerusalem, you would be blessed, but if you were in a Gentile nation, there would be no showers of blessing, no spiritual privileges, so that would be a spiritual wilderness or a spiritual desert. Quite a graphic way of picturing the lack of privilege that the Gentiles had. Well, when it says that the woman would fly into the wilderness, I think that it is saying that the nation Israel that would be in the land at the beginning of the tribulation period would undergo such persecution that they would have to flee out of their land, and the land would be emptied essentially of its Jewish inhabitants.

Now, the reason I don't think that this is Petra, but is a reference to Gentile nations, is that in Matthew 24-31, when Christ comes the second time, he's going to regather his people Israel, not from Petra, which would mean about a five-hour bus trip back to Jerusalem. He's going to regather them from the four corners of the earth, so that the nation is viewed as scattered all over the world. So then, what happens is that when Satan seeks to exterminate the Jews who are living in the land of Israel, Gentile nations will open their borders and will allow the people to get out of the land of Israel and find refuge in their different homelands.

The serpent seeks to destroy the nation. He pours out of his mouth water as a flood. Now, he doesn't say that there would be a flood, but it would be like a flood, have the same devastating results.

But his purpose is to destroy the nation, but the earth helped the woman, and the term the earth here could refer to the nations of the earth open their mouth and protected Israel from this satanic attack. Now, this exodus will take place in approximately the middle of the tribulation period. I can't go into it this evening.

We're going to go into it when we get into chapter 13, begin in chapter 16, that as a result of the military invasions in what we refer to as the campaign of Armageddon, Israel will no longer be able to maintain their identity as a nation, protect themselves. They will flee out of the land, hide themselves among the nations of the earth. But that does not terminate Satan's wrath, because in verse 17, 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.

Now, you notice in verses 13 to 16, it was an attack against the nation as a whole. But in verse 17, it's an attack against a portion of the nation, the believers, so that if Satan cannot destroy the nation, he will try to put to death every believer who has turned to Christ who came from the nation Israel. Now, what chapter 12 tells us is that these important actors are going to play significant roles.

Israel, Christ, the nation of Israel, Satan, the Gentile nations of the earth are all going to play their distinctive roles in the unfolding of this drama. Now, again, John is almost telescoping prophecy, and when we get on, as we will next time, we're going to get into the person and the work of that individual that we nickname Antichrist. And John is going to give us many important, significant revelations concerning this person.

Many people are much engrossed with the study of Antichrist, his person, his ministry. And I say to you, it's far more important to know something about the person of Christ than about the Antichrist. He will play a significant role, but we're not waiting for the coming of Antichrist, but for the coming of the person of Jesus Christ.

And we can join in saying, as John wrote at the close of his book, even so come, Lord Jesus. Father, thank you for the privilege of giving ourselves in this hour to this important part of this book. We have to bring together so many lines of prophecy and so much revelation of biblical truth, and we pray that the Spirit of God may help us to understand what is written, not just to satisfy our curiosity, but to quicken our expectation that the Lord Jesus Christ could come at any moment to translate us into his presence.

Thank you for that hope that is given to us, and we thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.

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