

Revelation 12:7–14

A Ministry in the Word

Scripture Reading

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is 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 our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. 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.

The Timing — Why It Matters

There is a position that says it is not important when this casting out of Satan takes place — only that it does. That position cannot be sustained. The time God appoints for a thing is as important as the thing itself. When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman — the cross had to occur at a specific epoch, when the testing of the first man was drawing to its close with the rejection of Christ. All the prophetic numbers — 1,260 days, 42 months, time and times and half a time — are given precisely because God is counting. To say

the timing does not matter is to dissolve the whole prophetic structure that gives these events their meaning.

Those who move the casting out of Satan back to the time of the Lord's words *I saw Satan fall as lightning from heaven* (Luke 10:18) misread that statement. The disciples had come back reporting that even the demons were subject to them. The Lord's response was anticipatory — a foreview, connected with the introductory works of power of the age to come, of which that casting out of demons was a sample and pledge. The age to come will not arrive before Satan falls as lightning from heaven. That is what the Lord foresaw — not that it was happening then and there.

Three Systems of Interpretation — and What Depends on the Answer

If this casting out is seen as future — as it must be, given that the time, times, and half a time that follows is still ahead of us — then one becomes a premillennialist. The question then is whether Christ comes for His saints before or after the tribulation. If it is moved back to the cross, one is thrown into amillennialism — the view that we are in the millennium now and Satan is bound now. The amillennial explanation of his current activity — that he is bound on a long chain — is a striking example of how a theological system forces its adherents into explanations that have no basis in the text. When Revelation 20 says that Satan is bound, cast into the abyss, shut up, and sealed, so that he cannot deceive the nations any more — those are not the words of a partial or long-chain binding. They are the words of complete incapacitation. The plain question is: if God intended to describe total inability to deceive the nations, how else should He have said it?

The Middle of the Week — Three Apostasies Come to a Head

The casting out of Satan at the middle of the seventieth week is the great hinge on which the last half of the week turns. At that point, a cluster of events occurs simultaneously, each connected with the others.

First — governmental apostasy. The wound of death of the beast is healed, and he receives his power and throne directly from Satan (Revelation 13:2). This is government no longer operating under the authority given to man at Noah, but under direct satanic energising. The whole earth wonders after the beast and worships the dragon.

Second — the apostasy of Christendom. The harlot who had been riding the beast during the first half of the week — professing Christendom in its corrupted form — is destroyed by the beast and the ten kings at this point. The religious vacuum that results is filled by the revelation of the man of sin, who sits in the temple of God showing himself that he is God. Those who had professed Christianity but loved not the truth are given over to the working of error and the worship of the Antichrist.

Third — apostasy from Moses. The Jewish worship that had been in force up to the middle of the week — the sacrifices in the rebuilt temple — is stopped by the Antichrist, the abomination that makes desolate is set up, and a false worship directed toward the beast and Satan takes its place. Every form of apostasy from what God has established — from government, from Christ, from the law — comes to its fullest expression at this point.

Two Groups of Martyrs — Distinguished in Revelation 20

Revelation 20:4 distinguishes two groups of tribulation martyrs who form part of the first resurrection. The first are *the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God* — those who suffered and died during the first half of the week, before the image of the beast was set up. These are the souls under the altar of the fifth seal in chapter 6, crying for vengeance and told

to wait. The second group are those *which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark* — martyrs from the last half of the week. Together with the saints on the thrones (including Old Testament saints and the caught-up church), these constitute the entire first resurrection. The rest of the dead do not live again until the thousand years are finished.

The prayers of the souls under the altar — *How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood?* — are not Christian prayers. They are imprecatory, calling down vengeance. They are entirely consistent with the Psalms — the prayers of the godly in the context of law, not of the dispensation of grace. Those who read the book of Revelation as a unfolding of church history are forced to make these Christians, which creates insuperable difficulties with every other New Testament instruction about how Christians are to respond to persecution.

The Woman Preserved — Into Her Place

When the dragon is cast out, he persecutes the woman. And to the woman are given two wings of a great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. The wings of the great eagle speak of something that enables the woman to rise above the immediate circumstances — enablement from God for what she could not accomplish in her own strength. The exact instrumentalities may not be given to us to identify precisely; some things in the book of Revelation may best await their explanation until the events themselves occur. What is certain is God's preservation of the woman as such, even as individuals within the remnant may be martyred. The corporate entity is preserved in the wilderness for exactly the three and a half years of the dragon's special fury — and will come up from it, as the Song of Solomon shows, leaning on her beloved.

— *Study ends* —