
Into Thy Word Bible Study in Revelation

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Revelation 12:13-17: “The Woman Perseveres”

General idea: John now sees that the great war is over, but the battle is taken to the streets of human life between struggling humanity that seeks its own and the Satan who sees his role to help people be independent from God. So Satan usurps his role as persecutor and makes war with humanity, focusing on the faithful. Satan is on a rage and seeks to hurt and destroy those who are of faith in Christ, whose trust is in Him. In the meantime God is caring for and sheltering His faithful, giving armor, abilities, and opportunity to defend ourselves by using His means and power—His “means” being His blood that we have as artillery and as protection.

The contrast is God’s Kingdom and authority and His abundance that is at our disposal. Even though Satan is out of office, his influence still prevails in the world and is *snaking* its way to you and your church. Satan seeks to accuse, while Christ seeks to save; Satan wants you defeated, Christ wants you triumphant. Why would anyone want Satan’s ways? Remember, Satan has been defeated, he has lost, and he can’t have you or your church unless you give it up by seeking him and not HIM.

Vs. 13-17: We are now halfway through the Book of Revelation! This passage has two main themes to it. One is the Exodus, how God led His people out of persecution on His wings, and then, continuing to show images that deal with authentic spiritual warfare. This is the ultimate conflict of good versus evil of light versus dark, rooted in history and with future ramifications. We see how Satan failed to stop the work of Christ and then was punished and thrown from Heaven, so he changed his game plan from hunting Christ to hunting His people. Now Satan hunts for people of faith or those with the potential to be of faith. He not only wants us wounded so we are ineffective, he wants us annihilated! We have a great enemy capable of unspeakable harm, but we also have a Great Savior who leads and protects us, and who is much greater and more powerful, beyond our imagination, to us and our enemy! This passage continues in the style of a Greek play in verses 12:1-6, with the story of “Leto and Apollo,” which would have been very familiar to John’s readers to identify with and contextualize to this plight and of how God intervenes and cares.

- *Pursued/persecuted the woman:* The meaning here is to “eagerly seek after, to pursue, to harass, cause trouble, molest.” Satan is being represented as creating and using deceit to trick and deceive people of faith and those who could be so (2 Thess. 2:9-10; Rev. 13:1-10).

- *Two wings of a great eagle*: Shows the plight of the Exodus and how God guides, protects, shelters and cares for His people (Ex. 19; Deut. 32:11; Psalm 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 91:4; Is. 40: Jer. 49:22).
- *Fly to the place prepared*: Indicates that God prepares and then comes through to deliver His people from their oppressors. Remember, Revelation is a book about God's grace and protection just as much as it is about condemnation and last days.
- *Desert*: Means a place that is deprived of aid and protection, a solitary, lonely, desolate, place. Here, it refers to God providing the manna for the people of the Exodus while they were in a desolate environment. In context, it shows the grace and hand of God as He cares and provides for His people. In the midst of dire circumstances, we have a God who not only cares, He is involved!
- *Be taken care*: Meaning God's provision to bring up, to nourish, and to support. This, in context, is also the expression of how Christ's work delivers us and enters us into His Kingdom as well as protects us in spiritual warfare (Rom. 8:12-17; Eph. 6:10-18).
- *Or a time, times and half a time*: Refers to the three and a half years of Daniel. Also stated as 1,260 days in the idioms and language of the early Church and Jewish community, and was colloquial for the period of time from the finished work of Christ until He comes back. This is the period in which the Church has been since its inception, where we are now at this writing. This is also shown in the context, as 12:1-6 shows Christ's exaltation, while 12:10 shows His salvation to us; in 12:11-17 the Church is shown in the world with faith and persecutions, then Christ returns to slay the Dragon. This encompass the Church Age (Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 4:32).
- *Out of the serpent's reach/face*: Protected from the deception, cunning, wisdom, and the outward appearance of evil. The application to this term is that we can tolerate all things with Christ!
- *From his mouth*: Meaning the "edge of a sword," as the utterance of thoughts to cause harm.
- *Spewed water...to overtake*: Means a flood or war and refers to being overwhelmed and carried away. This is a theme of judgment (Psalm 32:6; 69:15; Jer. 47:2).
- *Sweep her away*. This passage is a parallel to the Exodus.
- *The earth helped/hid*. For the Jewish audience, this meant that God sometimes uses His creation to intervene on behalf of others, such as the

earth opening and swallowing Korah and his wicked men, the tree that hid Isaiah, and Jonah and the great fish. This is also an illustration from the Greek story of “Leto and Apollo,” where the sea god hid and provided for *Leto*, and protecting her from a dragon so she could bear a child. The image here is that God protects and promises safety just as he did with the Exodus (Gen. 4:10; Num. 16:30-33; Is. 43:2; 53:7-8).

- *Enraged*: Satan is mad because he did not get his way and definitely does not want us to have His Way!
- *Make war*: How Satan produces and constructs quarrels and battles us fervently. He seeks to destroy and mislead us into thinking we do not need God. And, if his tricks do not work he will do all he can for as long as he can to destroy us. But, the great news in this passage is, we do not just have a great Referee, we have God on our side! Satan wants us to do his bidding, deceiving us along the way, but he can do nothing that God does not allow and he can't do anything against the strength and resources that Christ gives us.
- *Offspring/seed*: Means the descendents of Eve and more to the point believers who will obey God, and the one who will crush the serpents head. It refers to the people of God, Christians saved by faith. Christ also defeats Satan, but Satan, as prophesied, will bruise His and our heel (Gen. 3).
- *Who keep/obey*: This infers that those of faith have received their faith from Christ; thus, we resound to observe, attend, and carefully take care of His precepts and what He gives us. Keep in mind that there are conditions—not to our salvation other than to receive it by faith—but conditions under which to grow in our faith and service to Him. We have to have faith, we have to be saved in Christ, and we have to respond to Christ, being proactive with our faith in our situations, producing Fruit and character, not sitting and doing nothing.
- *Testimony of Jesus*: This refers to the testimony that Jesus bore by His work and involvement. Christ's blood and sacrifice prevails when we accept it and us it as our main artillery. Our unwavering faith in Christ, by whom and what He has done is too much for Satan to handle; he can't stand against the goodness of Christ. Thus, when we are in Christ, we prevail; Satan has already lost and has been defeated (Rev. 1:2, 9; 19:10).

Real spiritual warfare has more to do with the battle of the will. Rarely will we see the fire and brimstone that we expect; rather, we see what we want to see. Our will is the prime motivator; our needs are motivators and our desires are agendas. God's precepts are there, perhaps even known to us, but they go unheeded, unapplied, and/or unused. God's desire is for us to be formed in Jesus Christ, and in Him as Lord. Satan wants us to be centered on anything but

that; he wants us disobedient and distorted to the things of God, and God wants us surrendered and dependant with faith upon Him. This is the battle, where the line is drawn, where what we choose will determine whether we serve Satan or Christ. There is no in-between, no middle ground, and no other choice for us to undertake.

If Satan can't deceive us, he will resort to anything that works—from persecutions to being overworked and having no time for our Lord. Satan will even fill our schedule with good things to keep us distracted from the ultimate good of growing in our faith and being a positive influence of Christ to others. So, watch out how you are being used, how your time is allocated. If you think you are doing well by keeping the kids very busy in sports and all kinds of great activities, but there is no time for church or the things of faith, how good are your good works? When the main call and work is misplaced and forgone, you may be being deceived by Satan and rationalizing it. Be in prayer that your deeds are lined up to biblical character and precepts and not of your will and the ways of the world. Or else, we will be advocates of Satan rather than ambassadors of Christ. The devil is in the details; are you in our Lord (2 Cor. 5:20)?

Keep in mind that Satan's role is to take and steal, and God's role is for us to build and grow. Satan doesn't want us to have what he has freely given up himself and cannot have back such as intimacy with God, ever abundant love, triumphant life, goodness, and purpose with relationships that glorify Christ. Satan wants all the glory for himself.

He seeks for us to have rotten relationships, emptiness and purposeless lives of despair filled with anger, betrayal, and hopelessness. He says we can have fun and fulfillment, but just think it through; how much fun is losing and taking what we do not earn only to have it rot and be meaningless or going from one meaningless activity to the next looking for a "high" and satisfaction that never comes? We can have satisfaction in Christ and His abundance infusing us—something that Satan once had but rejected, and he fervently hates all those who have it and excel in Him! So, beware to his ways—how he wants us to hate, disguising it with misplaced emotions, confusion, and hurt, so we are taken away from our family, our opportunities neutered or push aside, and our fullness in Christ ridiculed, replaced with what is fleeting, hurtful, and meaningless.

Christ wants you triumphant in your Christian life and seeks to save you and give you what you need so you can grow and have meaning and abundance of life. In contrast, Satan wants you to be miserable and dysfunctional; he seeks to take away anything that can help you to have what he has given up. Why would anyone fall for Satan's methods? But, we can take heart and assurance in Christ that Satan has been defeated; he has lost, and he can't have you or your church unless you give it to him by seeking him and not HIM. The bottom line is this: Satan can easily manipulate and destroy us. We have no chance or hope against his ancient wisdom and power. However, when we are in Christ, he does

not have a chance against us! Satan can easily handle us, but he can't handle HIM!

The Preterist view: They see this passage as the continuance of verse 12:6 and show analogies of the escape of the Christians and pious Jews from the Jewish revolt and the counter Roman invasions of Jerusalem in 68-70AD. Most Christians escaped to other providences while some hid in the desert and caves near the Dead Sea, but all Christians were saved; none perished, which was quite a miracle (Dan. 7:21-22; Matt. 24:15-28). They see a contrast of the serpent that crawls and the Church that flies on wings, that resonates the Exodus. The flood is seen as human persecutions against the Church and the campaigns of Satan to destroy the people of God. In contrast, God protects, delivers, and helps provide the resources and guidance for the Church to persevere. They see "offspring" as the Gentile converts in the Early Church, and "spiritual Israel" as those of faith and not just of lineage.

The Futurist view: They see this passage as the result of Satan's defeat and his being cast down to earth where he pursues the woman. Basically, they see this as adding more details to verses 12:1-6. Some see this as literal, and others see the imagery of the Exodus in relation to the last days and that God provides. Most see the *flood* as a literal event that Satan and/or the antichrist uses to flush out the righteous, the refugees in hiding. Others see this as false teachings in the last days as referenced in 2 Peter, or the armies of the antichrist, which while descending on Jerusalem to exterminate the Jews, is frustrated or stopped as God opens the earth and swallows them. Then the "offspring" are those who testify to Christ; Satan and/or the antichrist, turns the attention to them.

The Idealist view: They see this passage as a testament of the Devil's defeat and his rage to attack the Church on earth. The woman represents the Church as it spreads into the world, giving birth to the Church Age and Satan's opposition against it as well as the opposition of corruption and apostasy. The wing of eagles is seen as the Exodus, and the protection of God on His Church. The flood is seen as all the human efforts, such as Islam, internal corruption, cults, false teaching, pseudoscience, and philosophy opposing the Church.

The Historicist view: They see this passage as metaphor, that the flight of the woman is the downfall of true spirituality and piety in the Church. Others see Satan's role as influencing the Catholic papacy and/or the Dragon is the papacy (Popes). Others see his role as to subvert and oppress the great doctrines of Augustine and others, and/or spiritual warfare to the individual faithful. The "wings of eagles," focusing on the word *two* is seen as western and eastern divisions of the Church. The "earth opened" is seen as the downfall of Rome, while others see this as the persecutions through the ages against the Church. The flight in to the *desert* is seen as God's protection of the Church's faithful.

Some in this camp date this age to 256 to 1514, between the beginnings of the fall of Rome and the start of Reformation.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. When has Satan seemed real and influential to you? What happened and what did you do?
2. Why does Satan seek to seduce us away from God by any means? What is his goal and purpose? How has God shown you Satan's depravity, stupidity and desperateness?
3. Read Eph. 6:10-18, God is caring and sheltering His faithful, giving us armor, abilities, and opportunity. So, what can you do to defend yourself using His means and power?
4. How has Satan filled our schedule with good things to keep us distracted from the ultimate good of growing in faith and being a positive influence of Christ to others? What does it mean to the endurance of your faith that God's Kingdom, His authority, and His abundance are at your disposal?
5. How have you seen Satan's influence prevailing in the world? How would he snake "hisss" way to you and your church? What can you do to protect your church?
6. How has Christ's victory over Satan influenced outcomes in your Christian life? How would you explain the consequences for Satan and those who follow him?

7. How does real, spiritual warfare have more to do with the battle of will than our personally battling Satan? Why do most Christians seem to just expect fire and brimstone? What are some other things that we should expect?
8. What happens when we as a church are being advocates of Satan and not ambassadors of Christ?
9. How has Satan sought to keep God's Word out of reach or in the dark? Has he been overt or just caused you to neglect? How can we discern between Satan's influences and our own depravity or laziness?
10. How is it that when Christians act with cunning and maliciousness we may be agents of Satan? How does our compliance by habit of sin or his influence infect your church? Does it make a difference?
11. How have you seen Christians tricked or tempted by seeking what they want distract them away from Christ? What can you learn from the falls and failures of others? What tempts you and what can you do to stand your ground in faith and not give in?
12. What can you do in prayer and with an accountability partner to make sure that your deeds are lined up to biblical character and precepts and not of your own will and the ways of the world? What can be done to help prevent your church from being negatively influenced? What should the Church do about this continual threat? How can you watch out for how you are being used and how your time is allocated so you are serving God and not the ways of the Dragon?