

THE WOMAN'S BABY AND THE DRAGON

This week a tragic story comes out of Santa Rosa where the grandchild of our principal at the Redwood School died of suffocation in a hot car. The mother had left the baby in the car seat for some six hours while working and then went on her lunch break to discover the dead child. Parents do everything in their power to be the protectors of their children, but when parents become negligent of their children's well-being there is a lifetime of recrimination.

“And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.” Revelation 12:1.

There is a great “wonder” or miracle in heaven. This woman is not Mary as some would have it, but rather the covenant people of God—the church. Jeremiah says, “I have likened the daughter of Zion [the church] to a lovely and delicate woman” (Jeremiah 6:2). The description of Solomon's bride, who was “beautiful as the full moon, as pure as the sun” (Song of Sol. 6:10) is reminiscent of this bride of Christ.

Being clothed with the sun she reflects the pure gospel of Jesus Christ. The “moon under her feet” is aptly a picture of the old Jewish era passing away as the Christian church arises in glory. The Mosaic ordinances reflected the light of the gospel as the moon reflects the light of the sun. The “garland of twelve stars” is the *stephanos* crown of victory promised to God's faithful people (Rev. 2:10; 3:11).

The twelve stars are the twelve apostles who established the church.

“And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.” Revelation 12:2.

This remarkable woman is pregnant and is about to give birth. She is not Mary as some would have it, but rather Israel who often experienced torment while preparing for the coming of the Messiah.

“And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.” Revelation 12:3.

Another “sign” appears in heaven, a great red dragon. This bloody and violent beast is a fit symbol of Satan (Rev. 12:9), but he uses a surrogate for his dirty work. The “seven heads” indicate this is Pagan Rome (Rev. 17:9, 10).¹ The “ten horns” represent the ten kingdoms that arose out of the Roman empire. Behind the formidable power of the state is Satan working against the church.

“And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth.” Revelation 12:4a.

Strangely enough Lucifer’s rebellion began in heaven where he aspired to be like God and overthrow His government. He was successful in attracting the support of one third of the angels. He is depicted as a crocodile sleeping and deceptive. And yet when you get too close to him he sweeps his powerful tail of destruction swiping about his

¹ The seven forms of government that have existed in the Roman empire are: kingly, consular, decemvirate, dictatorial, triumvirate, imperial, and papal.

duped victims. He brought his traveling horror show to this earth and was success in deceiving our first parents Adam and Eve.

A particularly disturbing story of a baby snatching came out of Australia a number of years ago. Lindy Chamberlain's family were on holiday at Ayars' Rock camping, when her baby whom she had placed in the tent came up missing. Evidence of blood was found about the campsite and further away.

The tragedy sparked a storm of controversy in the media over neglectful parents and possible child sacrifice. The Adventist couple were falsely accused and eventually it was determined that a dingoe had snatched baby Azariah. Such a heartrending story should captivate any parent as does this prophetic scene we are contemplating.

"And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born." Revelation 12:4b.

What are the odds that a mother and her newborn would survive the attack of a crocodile? Here Satan's surrogate, Pagan Rome, is depicted as ready to eat up the baby Jesus. Matthew records that Roman soldiers under Herod's command marched into Bethlehem to kill all the baby boys two years old or under.

All through His life on earth, Jesus felt the force of the "dragon's" wrath against Him. Well He knew that a greater power than pagan Rome lay behind it! History is a great war between Christ and Satan.

"And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was

caught up unto God, and to his throne.” Revelation 12:5.

But the devil’s overconfidence in thinking he could flick Jesus away like a pesty fly is soon turned to the reality that He is the Davidic king, anointed by God: “You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will make the nations as your heritage, and the ends of the earth as your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron” (Ps. 2:7-9, RSV). An iron scepter is one that cannot be broken or resisted. Christ will destroy all nations, including Rome, and then have dominion over new nations that will arise when He institutes His kingdom.

The baby Messiah is not eaten by the dragon. In fact, he is caught up to God and sits enthroned with the Father as co-ruler of the earth and universe wearing a victor’s crown. We sit with Him by faith in heavenly places.

“And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.” Revelation 12:6.

With the departure of the Child, the dragon refocused his energies on persecuting the woman through the long papal phase of Roman oppression. Just as ancient Israel escaped oppression in Egypt from Pharaoh and his taskmasters by fleeing into the wilderness of Sinai where God supplied all their needs by feeding them manna and water, likewise God prepared a wilderness of escape for the woman during the 1,260 years from 538 to 1798 A.D. God took care of Elijah in the wilderness for

These 144,000, who are victorious over the beast (Rev. 15:2-5), are the same as the “saints” (Rev. 14:12), who instead of worshiping the beast keep God’s commandments and the faith of Jesus.

When the allied forces went up against the German might on Normandy Beach and suffered such terrible casualties, the amphibious assault was successful in breaching the enemy’s fortifications. This D-Day victory gave hope to the troops coming in that the strongholds had been defeated and V-Day, victory, was not far distant. They believed that soon war would be over because the enemy was already a defeated foe.

Satan is a defeated enemy. He was defeated in the decisive battle on the cross where his destiny has been definitely decided. During the history of constant oppression, his efforts to destroy and sweep away the church have failed.

There is hope for us in knowing that we confront a defeated enemy. But Satan’s realization that he has failed too many times makes him angry. He enters the final conflict against Christ’s followers determined more than ever before to win the battle. He is preparing himself for that conflict accompanied by two allies, the beast from the sea and the beast from the earth (Rev. 13).

The Reformation of the sixteenth century began its work. God raised up Luther and his collaborators to expose the true character of the papacy, and break the power with which superstition had enslaved the minds of the people. Princes began to espouse the cause of the Reformers. It was the dawning of religious light and liberty, and God would not suffer the darkness to swallow up its radiance. Defenders of the true faith multiplied. And soon there was enough Protestant soil found in Switzerland, Germany, Holland, England, Norway, and Sweden, to swallow up the flood of papal fury, and rob it of its power to harm the people of God. Thus the earth helped the woman.

“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.

Anyone who loses their cool has already lost the battle. The Devil’s anger has been increased threefold over his defeat in heaven by Christ, his failure to exterminate the church of the wilderness during the 1,260 years. So he goes with full force against the “rest of her offspring.” Who are these survivors?

These are the 144,000 who are sealed with the seal of God. They are presented victorious, before the fact, standing on Mount Zion (Rev. 14:1-5). They have been victorious over the Devil’s two emissaries: the sea beast and the land beast of Revelation 13. These are his earthly agents to inflict damage upon the 144,000.

3½ years following his announcement of neither dew nor rain before King Ahab. God’s people, although banished to the wilderness, dressed in sackcloth, oppressed, and persecuted, are surviving under the protection of God and bearing their faithful witness for Christ and the gospel.

Thus it was that for 1260 years the true church of Christ was forced to “flee” into the “wilderness” for refuge. From all parts of Europe, persecuted people came to seek this refuge among the mountains of northern Italy and southern France. Some of them were known as Waldenses. Their homes and churches can still be seen in their valleys walled in by the mighty snow-crowned mountains that kept out the invaders who time and again would have destroyed them were it not for the protecting hand of God.

These were the faithful Christians who preserved the Bible for us, often at the cost of their lives. Throughout the Dark Ages they continued to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, though burdened by persecution and poverty. They were the true church “in the wilderness.”

“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.” Revelation 12:7, 8.

It comes as a shock to realize that of all places that war could break out heaven would be the last place we would think of it occurring. This war takes place after the ascension of Christ to heaven and

before the escape of the woman into the wilderness.

Michael is “the great prince” who protects God’s people in the final days of earth’s history (Dan. 12:1). He is “the archangel,” (Jude 9) and the commander-in-chief of the angelic army. The battle is not so much physical bloodshed as it is ideological and verbal. Michael protests, as any good Protestant must do. He stands up for the truth of God’s word and government. Christ and Satan are engaged in a verbal battle for the allegiance of the heavenly beings.

“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.” Revelation 12:9.

Satan’s *modus operandi* is deception. He tells lies about God. In addressing the Jews Jesus pulled no punches. “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” John 8:44. The Devil is a “slanderer” and “adversary.” He speaks lies about Jesus. He tells lies about the Father. He does this in order to pull off his *coupe de grace*. He has the audacity to go right into the Father’s house and “dis” Him on His own turf.

“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

eagles’ wings” and brought them to himself (Ex. 19:4). Just as God did for Israel in the wilderness at the time of the exodus, so he does for the woman/church in the wilderness in protecting her and sustaining her that she may remain faithful during the 1,260 years of persecution from the Devil’s surrogates.

“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.

The flooding waters of Satan’s persecuting force, and deception and false teachings are swallowed up by the earth opening its mouth. Similarly the earth swallowed him Korah, Dathan, and Abiram because of the rebellion against Moses’ authority and leadership. The Egyptians were swallowed up while pursuing Israel.

“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.

The “water” which the “serpent spewed out like a flood” may refer to the armies that many times marched against God’s people during those dark years of persecution. It may also refer to the many cleverly invented false doctrines which had their origin with Satan. Falsehood is Satan’s best tool.

“The earth helped the woman,” in that the persecuted church was saved from destruction. The armies of her enemies were turned back; the false doctrines were overcome by truth proclaimed by men of God such as Luther, Wesley, and others.

great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.” Revelation 12:12.

The song of the elders closes with the note of celebration over the expulsion of Satan and his angels from heaven. The inhabitants of heaven have special reason to make merry over the elimination of Satan from their surroundings. Nobody wants that sourpuss around. But there is a solemn warning, “Woe,” because of the Devil’s ejection to the earth. This is the only place now in all the vast universe where he can find asylum in exile.

He is angry. First, because he has suffered defeat in the passing of the dominion off to Christ. Second, he has been excommunicated from the heavenly council. Third, He suffers defeat from Christ’s followers because they overcome by the blood of the Lamb. Fourth, he realizes he has lost the war and thus his life is on the clock sitting on death row.

“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.

Satan realizes his impotence in fighting against Christ. Having failed to overthrow Christ, he turns all his attention to Christ’s followers, intending to harm and destroy them.

“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.

When Pharaoh was chasing the people of Israel after they had fled Egypt, God carried them “on

accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.” Revelation 12:10.

The “loud voice” is the chorus of the twenty-four elders who called Satan “the accuser of our brethren.” The Devil goes right into heaven and bad mouths the woman and trashes the followers of Christ as sinners. There are some awful critics and trash talkers, but the Devil takes the cake. Wherever you have criticism and blame there you have disunity.

God has to listen to this garbage about His people on earth. The Devil is a relentless prosecutor. No one gets a word in edgewise. He is always in sidebar with the Judge accusing the brethren “day and night.”

But what really bends the Devil out of shape is when Christ ascends to heaven as victorious over death and the grave and claims the victor’s crown to sit down with the Father as co-ruler over the dominion of the earth. The twenty-four elders are witnesses to this. They say, “Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ.” Satan claims to be “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). He wrested it from our father Adam. He is not going to give it up without a fight. So he has a long propaganda warfare going on persuading the angels throughout the thousands of years of earth’s history that the world belongs to him. And He has access to the Parliament table of the Heavenly Universe claiming to represent the interests of this earth as our elected representative. This is

government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Evidently, the heavenly intelligences grant him prerogative up until the death of Christ upon the cross. When they see that the end game of Satan is the annihilation of their beloved Commander, Jesus, then whatever influence Satan may have had over their minds is expelled. His true purposes are revealed. Jesus said just before His death, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18).

So Satan and his angels were voted off the heavenly council and excommunicated from the church of God in heaven after the ascension of Christ. Michael won a significant achievement in the war of the great controversy following his death on the cross and enthronement in heaven. He protested, in the war of words, as the defense attorney for the government of God, and the woman, His church on earth.

Christ won a legal verdict and a class action suit against the devil and his angels. He said: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." John 12:31, 32. It is the death of Jesus that marks the casting down of Satan as well as the exultation of Christ on the heavenly throne.

"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." Revelation 12:11.

If Jesus gained the victory in the great controversy with Satan in heaven, by virtue of His death upon

the cross, it stands to reason that His followers on earth will overcome by the power of the blood. Their victory is spoken of as a surety before the fact (proleptically). The blood of the Lamb will give the victory to all subsequent martyrs of the faith.

Because the Lamb's blood was shed, they had an answer to the accuser's charges, and they found a motivation to devote themselves to His service. These brethren have given a faithful testimony and confession even to the point of death and thereby have contributed to their own victory.

End of the Spear, chronicles the amazing power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to transform Stone Age savages into peaceful, loving people. Five Ecuadorean natives from the Waodani tribe brutally murdered Steve Saint's father, Nate Saint, and four other missionaries on January 8, 1959. Yet today Steve and his father's killer travel around the world together, powerfully proclaiming the story of the transforming grace found in the Word of God.

How did these Indians learn about God's grace? In his book Steve tells how his aunt Rachel (his murdered father's sister) chose to remain living with the Ecuadorean tribe at their invitation, while she painstakingly translated the Bible into their dialect. She then taught a few of them to read, all the while telling them stories of Jesus and the principles of peace found in the Bible. Slowly many of these people began to "walk the Jesus way."

"Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having