

14a REV

This is Friday, the 11th of November, 2005, Veterans Day. We continue tonight our study in the book of Revelation, picking up at the threshold of chapter 12. Let's take a moment as we begin to reflect, to exercise our individual priesthood as we go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we are grateful for the daily expressions of your grace and mercy toward us. We thank you for our salvation, for the completely different complexion of life that is our possession and our heritage because of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not live our lives as those who have no hope.

We understand our purpose. We recognize our place. We see the potential that you have made possible for us each and every day to seize and lay hold of righteousness by faith, to lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven, to build future opportunities for service and for reflecting your glory both in this life and in the next through those things which you have provided to us.

We thank you for the opportunity to spend time together in the study of your word this evening, and we ask that God the Holy Spirit will minister it to our hearts. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

We left off last time in Revelation chapter 11, verse 17 and 18 with the worship chant of the 24 elders who sit before God. The broad sequence in the last several chapters has been the seven seals, and at the breaking of the seventh seal we began to see the blasts of the trumpets. We saw six trumpets and then an interlude that began in chapter 10 and extended through chapter 11 up to verse 15.

Then verse 15 tells us the seventh angel sounded. When you look at students of the book of Revelation, you read commentaries and so on, most of them say that the opening of the seventh seal is the inception or the beginning of the seven trumpets, and the blowing of the seventh trumpet is the beginning of the bowl judgments. Well, the seventh trumpet blows here in verse 15, but the bowl judgments don't actually unfold until chapter 16, and that's quite a distance.

I don't see a real direct connection between the blowing of the seventh trumpet and the bowl judgments. They're just quite a distance apart. But what the seventh trumpet does produce is the proclamation of the kingdom, and we saw that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.

I kind of glossed over this last time, but who is speaking those words? It's not George Frederick Handel, although there's a great part of that Messiah music that makes use of this passage. Who's speaking here saying the kingdoms of this world have become the

kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ? That's an angel speaking, and to whom does he refer when he says our Lord? Which member of the Godhead would that be? It's God the Father, right? The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. His Christ, of course, is His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and so our Lord here must be God the Father.

It can't very well be God the Holy Spirit, nor can it be Christ, since it would be redundant. So this is God the Father, and it makes sense because if the angel said something about the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ, that would be unusual for Scripture. We don't see Jesus specifically referenced as the Lord of the angels.

God the Father is the Lord of the angels. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Lord of human beings. Not to say that Jesus is not superior to them.

He has a much more excellent name than they. We study that in the book of Hebrews. You can find it also in Psalm 8. He is made a little lower than the angels.

He is crowned with glory and honor. He's far above all principalities and powers. Obviously, Jesus is superior.

I'm not saying that He isn't. I'm just saying that in the terminology of Scripture, you don't find the second person of the Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ, specifically referred to as the Lord of the angels, in the same way that you don't find Jesus Christ referred to as King of the church. Jesus is certainly the Messianic Davidic King, but that's not His relationship to us.

So, it's quite interesting that the loud voices in heaven, the seventh angel sounds. As the seventh angel blows the trumpet, then there are loud voices in heaven. Now, where are these voices coming from? It does not say, are they the 24 elders? Are they angelic voices? Are they the white robe multitudes? There's any one of several possibilities here.

It just says loud voices saying, the kingdoms of this world have become literally of our Lord and of His Christ. The kingdoms of this world have become of the Lord and of His Christ. That's kind of how it works in Greek.

You don't really have to repeat the noun. And He shall reign forever and ever. Now, this sort of lacks specificity in English, doesn't it? Who is He that is going to reign forever and ever? Is it our Lord or His Christ? A little pop quiz question here.

You should be able to answer this question from your resident scriptural knowledge. Who is it that's going to reign forever and ever? The Lord or Christ? It is the Lord. Answer A. How do we know? Because at the end of the Millennial Kingdom, Scripture tells us Jesus will turn over everything that God the Father has given to Him back to the Father.

We move from the Kingdom of the Son to the Kingdom of the Father. And it is the Father who reigns forever and ever. The kingdoms of the world are given to His Christ.

His Christ is going to turn them back over to the Father at the end of the Millennium. Everything will be rolled up, new heavens, new earth. Kingdom of the Father.

He will reign forever and ever. The 24 elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying, We give you thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because you have taken your great power and reigned. In case you missed answer A the first time, it gives you the answer.

This is the great thing about taking multiple choice tests, isn't it? Sometimes if you can't think of the answer to one, you just go a few problems ahead and they essentially give away the answer in number 17 to number 15. You just have to kind of keep reading. Because you have taken your great power and reigned.

This is the Lord God Almighty. This is God the Father. The nations were angry and your wrath has come and the time of the dead that they should be judged.

Now, the 24 elders are manifestly human beings. They wear white robes. They have crowns.

They sit on thrones. They are in heaven. So, they are not going to climb down off their thrones and put their crowns on the crown rack and put their robes on the peg and go get judged again.

They are all done, right? They have lived. They have died. They have been resurrected.

They have been judged. They have been rewarded. They are seated on the thrones.

And now they sing this song that the time has come for the dead to be judged. So, which resurrection is this, numerically speaking? This is resurrection number three. Resurrection number one, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Resurrection number two, the church of which the 24 elders partook. Further evidence of who the 24 elders are, if they are human, but they are already glorified, they are already resurrected, they are already sitting on thrones, they are already wearing crowns, they already have their white robes, then they have to have previously been resurrected. They have to previously have been installed in heaven.

This is additional evidence for the pre-tribulational rapture of the church. As if we did not have an abundance of it already, we have even more here, and we are going to see even more as we go forward. But, the 24 elders who are already sitting before God on the throne, at the founding of the seventh trumpet, which manifestly takes place in the 70th week of Daniel, the trumpet blows, the voice sounds and says, the kingdoms of the world

have become the kingdoms of God the Father and of his Christ.

The 24 elders now fall on their faces and worship God, because they are humans, and that is what humans do, we worship God, saying, we give you thanks Lord God Almighty, nations are angry, your wrath has come, and the time of the dead that they should be judged, and that you should reward who? Verse 18 of Revelation 11. Who is God going to reward? Your servants, the prophets and the saints, the Old Testament saints. This is the prediction of the resurrection of Old Testament saints.

Time has come that they should be judged. You reward your servants, the prophets and the saints, and those who fear your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth. That would be everybody else.

That is where we left off last time. Now we come to verse 19. Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of his covenant was seen in his temple.

There were lightnings, noises, thunderings and earthquakes and great hail. Now, where do these weather phenomena take place? In heaven or on earth? You can't have hail in heaven. This is my theory.

You can't have hail in heaven. The conditions are just not right. Hail tells you it's earth.

Don't have hail on Mars. Don't have hail on the moon. Don't have hail in heaven.

The only place in the universe that scientifically you can state without fear of contradiction you can get hail is planet earth. Earth history is still going forward. There are still people down there.

The trumpet is blown. The time of God's wrath has come. And the time of resurrection of the Old Testament saints is near.

So this trumpet is essentially the last trumpet for whom? Israel. Seventh trumpet sounds. The church people who already got raised say, hey, time to raise up those dead saints and prophets and reward them.

And the small and great who had feared the name of God. At that point, the temple of God is opened in heaven and the ark of his covenant is seen. Now, how many arks of the covenant are there? If your salvation depended on the answer to this question, what would you say? How many arks of the covenant are there? There are exactly two.

There is one on earth and there is one in heaven. We have seen in our discussion, our study of the book of Hebrews, that the pattern of things that was given to Moses on the mountain were copies of heavenly things. The earthly tabernacle, the earthly table, the earthly ark were copies of heavenly things.

This is not the temple in Jerusalem that gets opened to reveal the ark. This is the temple

of God in heaven. Temple on earth is a copy of the heavenly temple.

Ark on the earth is a copy of the... So now, aren't you glad your salvation did not depend on the answer to that question. The ark of his covenant was seen in his temple. Now, how often did the door get opened so people could see the ark in the tabernacle, later the temple? How many times did that ever happen? It actually never happened.

Because when the temple veil was rent in twain and it opened, it revealed an empty holy of holies because the ark of the covenant was long gone. Veil was rent which direction? Bottom to top? Top to bottom. Who is doing the ripping? If man is doing the ripping, you start at the bottom and rip upward.

If God is doing the ripping, you start at the top and rip downward. It's very specific. At the time of the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross, the veil in the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom by God.

And when it parted, it revealed the vacuous, empty nature of worship in Jerusalem because the ark was not there. The ark disappeared in the time of Jeremiah, never to be seen again. Just before the time of Ezekiel.

The accoutrements of the temple that are carried off by Nebuchadnezzar and so on do not include the ark. And Jewish tradition says that Jeremiah was more or less directly responsible for ensuring that the ark was not taken. Some strands of tradition say that it was secreted at Mount Hermon.

Others say that it was secreted in the Temple Mount. There are rumors to the effect that it is still there. Some people claim to have seen it there.

But the Arabs control the mountain. You can't get in there to find out. Just like the Turks control Ararat.

You can't go find the ark. So, what does it mean? Why should this happen at this point? Trumpets blowing. Judgments falling.

Witnesses witnessing. And being slaughtered and being raised up and carried to heaven. And now, the sounding of the seventh angel.

The shift in kingdoms. The God of this world has been controlling the kingdoms of the earth or at least having influence over them. Now, God is taking them back.

At the sounding of the seventh trumpet. It was no idle offer that Satan made during the Temptations, was it? To the Lord Jesus. All of these kingdoms that you see, I will give you if you will fall down and worship me.

They are in some way, shape or form his to give. But no longer. At the blowing of the trumpet, the kingdoms of the world have become the kingdoms of God.

God is taking them over. Delegating the ruling authority to his son. Who in turn seems to have a Davidic regent reigning in Jerusalem.

As we saw last time. So then the 24 elders give thanks. Proclaim that the time of the dead to be raised has come.

That they should be judged and be rewarded. Then the temple of God is opened and the ark is seen in the temple. Why? Well, what did John do at the beginning of the last chapter? What happened at the beginning of chapter 11? This chapter opens and closes with references to the temple, doesn't it? Chapter 11 verse 1. John says, I was given a reed like a measuring rod.

The angel said, rise and measure the temple of God. The altar and those who worship there. And which temple was that? That's the earthly temple.

How do we know? It's got a court of the Gentiles who tread the holy city underfoot for 42 months. Gentiles are not trampling the court of the Gentiles in heaven. It's on earth.

So John takes the measuring rod. And we talked last time about the role of the rod as an instrument of discipline and judgment. Jesus is going to rule the nations with a rod of iron.

When John is told to measure, he's not given a measuring tape. He's not given a laser distance finder. He's given a rod.

Why? What is the implication? It never tells us what his conclusion is once he measures it. What do we know after he measures the temple and the altar and those who worship there? The two witnesses prophesy. They are rejected.

They are killed. And as a result, there is a great earthquake. In verse 13, a tenth of the city falls.

In the earthquake, 7,000 people are killed and the rest are afraid and give glory to the God of heaven. Why? Because the temple and the city essentially have been weighed into balance and found wanting. Same as it was at the first advent of Jesus Christ.

Those two witnesses are retracing the steps of the Lord Jesus. In witnessing for three and a half years, being rejected, being slain, being ridiculed, being mocked, being resurrected. And their rejection is the basis for judgment.

So John's measuring of the temple that opens the chapter is a weighing in the balance and finding it wanting. Verse 19, by way of contrast, you have the perfect temple. What's going on in heaven while the people down on earth are not worshiping God? What's in the temple, by the way, when John measures it? What does John see in the last half of the tribulation when he measures the temple? What is in that temple for the whole three

and a half years of the ministry of the two witnesses? The AD, the big AD, the abomination of desolation is in there.

Jesus tells the Jews in Matthew 24, when you see the abomination of desolation set up in the temple, get out of town. Immediately. Don't go in for your coat.

Pray that it's not the Sabbath. Pray that your wife's not pregnant. Get out of town.

Head for the hills. Depart. The temple of God is open in heaven and the ark of his covenant is seen in the temple.

There's the abomination of desolation down on earth. John measures that thing and says it's going to be trampled for 42 months. The holy city is going to be trampled for 42 months because when he measures the temple, it doesn't measure up.

But in heaven, there are voices praising God. He's going to reign forever and ever. The 24 elders are falling on their faces and worshiping God.

The temple is open in heaven and the ark of his covenant is seen. There are lightnings, noises, thunderings, earthquakes and great hail. There is a contrast between the temple in heaven and the temple on earth.

There is an ark of the covenant in the temple in heaven. There is an abomination of desolation on earth. When you look at the earthly temple, you see the abomination.

When you look at the heavenly temple, you see the ark of God's covenant. The perfect, true ark of the covenant. And God says, as the prayer of Jesus that he gave to the disciples, Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

And this is the fulfillment of the Lord's prayer. Thy kingdom come. Who is Jesus praying to? God the Father.

The kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. He shall reign forever and ever. Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That prayer of the Lord Jesus is being fulfilled right before our eyes at the blowing of the seventh trumpet. That heavenly temple is open.

The ark of the covenant, the perfect expression of God's salvation will for mankind, and specifically for Israel, is revealed. The ark of the covenant is for Israel. Now, Catholics, especially modern Catholics, I've told you before, Patty and I heard this guy going on and on about how Mary is the ark of the covenant, and she's the co-redemptrix.

You can't believe the way this is twisted and distorted in the modern day. Because they go on to chapter 12, verse 1. A great sign appeared in heaven. A woman clothed.

And they say this woman is the Virgin Mary. The temple is open. They say there really shouldn't be a chapter break here.

Or if there is, it should be at the end of verse 18. The temple is open. The ark appears.

And here's the woman. And it's all Mary. Well, the whole Mary-olatry thing has gotten just totally out of hand.

They just had another report on that here recently, looking at all of the apparitions of Mary under a bridge in Milwaukee or something. And they see a salt stain and it's Mary. And there's a picture of her weeping in one place.

And somebody put blood on her eyes in another place. And, you know, Guadalupe and on and on and on. They've got all these apparitions of Mary.

And the last pope that just died was a big Mary-olater. Everybody's all a big fan of John Paul, but he was a big time, John Paul II, but he was a big time fan of Mary. And he's largely encouraged this whole thing about Mary being declared the co-redemptrix.

But, you know, what do the Catholics know anyway? So we move on to chapter 12 here. Because now a great sign appears in heaven. The ark of the covenant, what does it represent? Think of the name.

Ark of what covenant? Ark of what covenant? God's promises to Israel. What's inside the earthly copy of the ark of the covenant? Tables of the law. The rod of Aaron that budded.

The pot of manna. All of these represent God's provision, God's promises, God's dedication to the people and the nation of Israel. His covenant promises must be fulfilled or God is not God.

And if he doesn't fulfill his promises to Israel, what guarantee do we have he's going to fulfill any of his promises to us? So immediately, when it is time for the dead saints of Israel to be raised, the temple opens. Now, this is a real interesting thing, by the way, before I go into chapter 12. The temple doors opening by themselves is sort of a motif.

It's an iconic sort of idea in ancient religion. Listen to this. You remember Virgil and the Aeneid? At least you've heard of it.

Virgil was an ancient poet way back. In the Aeneid, listen to this. Scarce had I spoken when suddenly all things shook.

The temple, the sacred laurel, the whole hill moved around us. The shrine sprang open. The tripod clanged.

As we fell prostrate, a voice came to our ears. Oh, Dardan's hearty men, the land that first gave you in your father's birth with wealth and joy will take you back. Look for your

ancient mother.

And this temple opens up in connection with a great earthquake. There was a Jewish tradition recorded in Tractate Yoma in the Talmud. This is an ancient one.

This goes back to before the time of the destruction of the temple. This is a royal tradition in Israel. The rabbis believed that 40 years before the destruction of the temple, the doors of the temple, the heikal, would open by themselves.

Swing open. What happened 40 years before the destruction of the temple in 70 AD? It wasn't the outer doors that swung open. It was the inner veil that was rent in twain.

It was 40 years before the destruction of the temple. Circa 30 AD, when Jesus was crucified, there was an opening of the door. So there was a little bit of traction to that particular tradition.

But this true ark that becomes visible is a model, or it's the true thing of which the earthly one is the copy. We saw this in Exodus chapter 25 and verse 9. According to all that I show you, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of its furnishings, just so you shall make it, and so on. God has reminders in heaven about his covenant, just as he has put reminders on earth about his covenant.

He made a covenant that he would never destroy the earth by flood, and he put a rainbow down here on earth. He made promises to Israel, and he gave them the ark of the covenant and the tablets of the law, and so on. So when these open, it is symbolic.

It's communicating the fact that God has not forgotten his promise, and now it's going to be fulfilled. So it makes sense that in chapter 12, verse 1, a sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of 12 stars. Being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.

Another sign appeared in heaven. Behold, a great fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns and seven diadems on his head. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth, and the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth to devour her child as soon as it was born.

She bore a male child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. Her child was caught up to God in his throne. Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she has a place prepared by God that they should feed her there 1,260 days." Well, what's going on here? What is the Ark of the Covenant a picture of? We saw this when we went through the whole construction of the tabernacle.

What's it made of? Wood overlaid with gold, just like the table of showbread. What is that a picture of? The God-man, hypostatic union, gold representing deity, acacia wood representing humanity, and the Ark itself, Jesus Christ, is that place of meeting. God

comes down and dwells.

That's his throne on earth, so to speak. His symbolic throne is the Ark of the Covenant. His presence is in the Holy of Holies, and that's the meeting place.

Man approaches through the curtains, through the altar, through the laver if he's a priest, through the curtains, into the holy place, and so on. So now we have this great sign appearing in heaven, the woman clothed. Who is the woman? It's not the Virgin Mary, and believe me, it seems to me obvious to the casual observer that this is what? It's Israel.

It's the nation of Israel. But a lot of commentators, even up to the present time, have tried to make this the church. The church is the woman.

And the 12 stars are the 12 apostles, etc., etc. It's nuts. This is all about Israel.

The church doesn't have an Ark of the Covenant. The church doesn't have a temple. The church doesn't have prophets and saints who are going to be raised.

This is Israel. Great sign, a woman clothed with the sun, moon, and moon under her feet, garland of 12 stars on her head. So you say, all right, it's Israel.

What does the sun and the moon and the stars represent? Well, innumerable people that you consult will say, well, this goes back to the dream of Joseph. Remember the dream that he had? He saw the sun and the moon and 11 stars bowing down to him. And when you put Joseph in the constellation, that gives you 12 stars.

So what does that make the sun that the woman is clothed with here? Jacob, Israel, identity of Israel. And the moon, who's the moon? Who was the moon in Joseph's dream? Careful now. Who was the moon in Joseph's dream? By the way, I will tell you, Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost, bless his elderly heart, got this wrong.

I can show you in print where he goofed on this. You know who Pentecost says the moon is? Rachel. And my question for you is, how can Rachel be bowing down to Joseph when she's dead and buried in Bethlehem? Who's the moon? Leah.

The right woman, if you believe in that doctrine. The right woman for Jacob, the wife that he was supposed to have, is Leah. She is the honored wife.

She has seven sons before Rachel has any. She's the one that survives. Rachel gets knocked out.

She's the faithful, consistent wife. She's the one that loves Jacob and bears all of her children trying to make him happy. Rachel's the flighty one.

From whom does Judah spring? From whom does Levi spring? From whom do all the

meaningful sons spring? Where does the bad king of Israel come from? What tribe is Saul from? Benjamin. Who's Benjamin's mother? Rachel. Who is the son, the tribe name that represents the ten northern tribes that get wiped out and go out in 721 BC? What's that whole nation called? Ephraim.

Who is the son of? Joseph. Who is the son of? Which mother? Rachel. That's the left-handed side there.

She's the second wife. Well, if you were to try to make this fit the dream of Joseph, nothing against Joseph, by the way. He's a type of Christ.

He has a tremendous life. A third of the book of Genesis is devoted to Joseph. So, there's nothing wrong with Joseph.

But, just keep in mind that the moon in that vision is not Rachel, unless there's some other bigger moon somewhere else. What does this represent? To understand it, what we really need to do is get beyond the knee-jerk reaction to associate this sign in heaven with the dream of Joseph. What do the sun and the moon represent? The sun, moon, and stars.

Is that the only place that they occur in the Old Testament? Not by any stretch. They occur clear back in Genesis chapter 1. What does Genesis chapter 1 say about the sun and the moon and the stars? What are they for? They determine the times. They illuminate the earth.

The sun by day and the moon by night. That's your illumination. That's how you figure out what's going on.

That's how you can see to walk and to operate. That's your light. Now, if the woman is Israel, then what is the sun with which she is clothed and the moon that is under her feet? Well, first of all, who are the custodians of divine light in the ancient world? Who are the stewards of the word of God? It's the nation of Israel.

Israel has the light. Israel is the light. What did God promise Abraham? You will be a light to the Gentiles.

And this woman in the heavens is clothed with the sun and has the moon under her feet. She is the light in this scenario. So that sort of makes sense.

What does the sun and moon represent in that case? That's essentially the light of the word of God. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. The sun that rises with healing in his wings in Malachi.

I mean, from Genesis to Malachi in the Old Testament, you could look at this as the law and the prophets. The sun being the law and the moon being the prophets. The

illumination of the word of God is personally and inextricably linked and associated with Israel.

You don't find the word of God anywhere but Israel in the Old Testament. And I think that's what this really has to do with. It's not Jacob and Leah or Jacob and Rachel or anything else.

This is the illumination that God has provided to man to light his way. It's all about Israel. The twelve stars and the garland around her head, this is her identifying twelve number.

These are the twelve tribes and each of them is the smallest light and yet still a light. You use the stars for navigation and so on. We look to Israel, we look to the history of Israel in the Old Testament, but literally they don't hold a candle to God's word.

But they are to be lights. They are to be salt and light, Jesus told them. So, that's what we have going on here with this symbolism.

Then, being with child, she cried out in labor and pain to give birth. Of course, this child is the Lord Jesus Christ. It's irrefutably defined for us in verse 5. She bore a male child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron.

The child is the Lord Jesus Christ. Hands down, end of discussion. That means that the woman is not the church.

If you want to be a Catholic and say that it's the Virgin Mary, you've got some other problems because she is not from all twelve tribes. She doesn't exist in heaven. This is national Israel.

The other sign that appears in heaven is a great fiery red dragon. Seven heads, ten horns, seven divided ends on his head. We'll talk about those in a moment, what they mean specifically.

But this red dragon is the devil. He is identified as the dragon by the Lord Jesus. He has a tail that draws a third of the stars of heaven and throws them to the earth.

The stars of heaven here are angelic. We know this from Job. We know this from the Psalms, the stars.

Psalms 8, when I look up in the heavens and I see the sun and the moon and the stars. What is man that thou art mindful of him? The son of man that thou visitest him. Satan stands before the woman who is ready to give birth, to devour her child as soon as it is born.

This is the historic, satanic and demonic opposition to the nation of Israel ever since the nation formed. Satan tried to stomp them out when they were in Egypt with the edict to kill the male children working through Pharaoh. And God, through the nine plagues and

then the Passover night, making ten, thwarted the plan of Satan to extinguish Israel in captivity in Egypt.

And ever since then, the Amalekites, the Canaanites, the subsequent incursions by the Assyrians, by the Babylonians, the takeover of the land by the Greeks and later by the Romans, all down through history, there have been satanic attempts at a national level, coming right on down to the present, to exterminate Israel. But particularly in the Old Testament days, because Satan is no dummy. He understood the promises of God.

He knew that the Son of God would come from Israel and there is no better way to prevent that than to get rid of the nation. So this standing before the woman, ready to devour her child, this summarizes the satanic opposition that you find most clearly expressed in terms of angelic opposition in the book of Daniel. With the princes at work and the prince of Persia and the Persians and the whole thing with Xerxes and Haman, there is another satanic attempt to wipe out the Jews.

But she nevertheless bears this male child who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron. The child is caught up to God and is thrown. And you have the life of Jesus Christ summarized in half a verse.

He is born and he gets caught up to God. The crucifixion, the greatest event in human history is glossed over because we have a different end in view. There is a different meaning to this symbolism.

Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she has a place prepared by God and you gloss over the entire church age. This is looking at time from Israel's perspective. And as soon as Jesus goes up at the ascension and you have the day of Pentecost and that Israel clock stops and now it starts again, what do you have? You have the 1260 days and the first three and a half years of the tribulation are glossed over.

And the woman flees into the wilderness. This is at the point of the abomination of desolation being set up in the temple. The woman, meaning faithful Israel, those of the 144,000 with the mark of God and not the mark of the beast, flee and leave.

And the only ones left to bear witness are the two witnesses of God during this time because the woman has fled into the wilderness where she has a place prepared by God that they should feed her there 1260 days. The faithful will be preserved, will be fed, will be nourished, will be comforted and cared for in the wilderness. By what means? It doesn't say.

But it says she's fed, she's preserved there. So we have the sweep of Old Testament history all the way through the end of the 70th week summed up in these half a dozen verses here. It's all about Israel.

The church isn't important. Even the work of Jesus on the cross is not specified in this

picture because the focus is on Israel. Now this is instructive when you go to passages like the 16th chapter of Luke and you're looking at the parable of the rich man and Lazarus and people say, wait a minute, how can that be an accurate parable of the afterlife? Well, it's not a parable of the afterlife.

It is a parable making a single point. You better pursue righteousness in this life so that you will be comforted in the next. That's what Lazarus did and that's what the rich man did not do.

And trying to draw all kinds of conclusions from that picture of Abraham's bosom and the flames and the drop of water and the great gulf is fallacious. Look at the point of the parable. Look at the point of this sign in heaven.

It is not to be an accurate and proportional representation of human history. It is specifically making a single point about national Israel. National Israel is what is in view and other things shrink in insignificance.

That's the same thing that happens in the rich man and Lazarus parable. The same thing that happens in many of the parables of the Lord Jesus. Well, now that we've looked at verse 19 and the first six verses of chapter 12, what is our conclusion? God is keeping track in heaven.

God forgets none of his promises, but God has a timetable. How many hundreds of years has it been since God made the promises to Israel that were represented by that ark? It's been hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years. 3,400 years since the first copy of the Ark of the Covenant was manufactured and put out there for Israel as a teaching tool.

But there is a heavenly reality of that ark and those promises that is ever before the face of God. God is always in the Holy of Holies in the heavenly temple. That's his throne.

And God never forgets his promises. They may seem from a human perspective to have faded from view. Remember in Peter, all things go on as it has from the beginning.

The promises of God are never going to be fulfilled. He delays his coming. If there is a delay in the fulfillment of God's plan and purpose, it is because of mercy.

It is not the will of God that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. That delay is the mercy and the grace of God. When we see a delay in the fulfillment of God's promises to us, we have to remember that is not tardiness on God's part.

That's not apathy or indifference on God's part. That is mercy and grace. In some way, in some shape, in some form, the delay in the fulfillment of God's promise is a mercy.

And you have to believe it. It's the consistent witness of scripture from Genesis to

Revelation. God is merciful.

God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. And that's the reason God is delaying the fulfillment of these promises. By delaying the fulfillment of his covenant to Israel, look how many Gentiles have come into the fold of eternal life.

If God had wrapped everything up with Israel at the first advent, we wouldn't even exist. We wouldn't be here. It is the grace and the mercy of God.

Did Israel have to suffer for a time and wait, like those souls under the altar? How long, O Lord? Of course they did. But through them being broken out of the tree, as Paul says in Romans, other branches have been grafted in them. Those other branches are us.

And I, for one, am grateful that God's plan and purpose involves delay of promises being fulfilled. Well, we'll pick up here when we come back from the break.