

Revelation 20-05-21a

This is Thursday, the 21st of May, 2020, and we continue our study in the book of Revelation, where we have been looking at the overall structure of the book and what the major sections are and how they relate to one another. And we'll be picking that up again tonight. We're going to put in place some of the vision material that is interleaved between the trumpets and bowls in particular.

And this will help us, I think, be able to go to any part of the book of Revelation and the brush and to understand where we are in navigating the book. So we'll pick up with that after we take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study. We'll get started.

Father, we're grateful for another opportunity to spend time in fellowship and in the study of your word. We thank you for the illuminating ministry of your Holy Spirit to give us confidence in seeing the pertinence and applicability of every portion of your word. And in particular, the part that we look at tonight, we pray that his explanatory, comforting, and encouraging ministry will be manifest and evident for each one of us as we look into these challenging portions of your word and understand our place in your plan and purpose, both now and in the days ahead.

We pray that in all things, our Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified. And we ask in his name, amen. The manifest, most evident structural clue in the book of Revelation is of course, the number seven.

The book opens with the vision that John sees in the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to speak to John and to reveal to him the content of this book, to introduce him to this series of revelatory visions. And then we have the seven candlesticks and the manifest connection of those to the seven churches that are spoken of in Revelation chapter two and three. We have the seven seals, the seven trumpets, the seven thunders, the seven bowls.

We have the seven spirits, which are before God's throne. And less obviously, in fact, I've seen lists where this gets left out, but we have the seven heads of the beast. And then finally, in the concluding chapters of the book, we have the seven no mores.

And let me just get those out of the way at the beginning, because we're gonna focus on some of the other sevens tonight and some of the things that are between them. But the seven no mores are interesting. These are all in chapter 21 and 22.

The first one is in Revelation 21, verse one. And this is, there is no more sea. And with all of the imagery of the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, its waters casting up mire and dirt, there is no peace for the wicked.

The sea representing the churning, chaotic forces of darkness in some cases, the nations who know not God. There being no more sea is a wonderful anticipation for the time of the kingdom of

the Father. Revelation 21, one, no more sea, that's the first.

The second, third, fourth, and fifth are all in Revelation chapter 21, verse four. And this is no more sorrow, no more crying, no more pain and no more death. Sorrow, crying, pain and death, all no more in Revelation 21, four.

The final two are in Revelation chapter 22. In 22, three, we find that there is no more curse. And in 25, five, we find that there is no more night.

This is your famous piece in the valley line, the lamb is the light. And so there is no more night. Particularly significant when you look at these descriptions of torment day and night, there's coming a time when there is no more night.

So you would suspect that there is a limitation on the day and night nature of the torment. So those are the seven no mores with which the book closes. The seven churches are primarily what the book opens with in terms of a septet.

And I've seen attempts to try to launch and line up the seven churches with the seals, trumpets and bowls. And to say that perhaps the various churches of Philadelphia or Smyrna or Sardis and the rest would somehow line up in their nature or in their challenges in their failures and their successes with the times that are spoken of in the seals or the trumpets or bowls. And I am entirely unpersuaded by the arguments to that effect.

And this is a good introduction to what we're gonna look at in the first session tonight, which is the importance of distinguishing Israel and the church. Your first quiz question for tonight, of what age do the seven years of the 70th week of Daniel partake? Are they the age of Israel or are they the age of the church? And you know the answer to this when you go to Daniel 9 and the explanation is being given to Daniel that 70 weeks are determined upon your people, your people. And those weeks, 69 of them precede the coming of the Messiah and the 70th, the final seven-year period is what we loosely call the tribulation.

Technically, it is the last half, the last three and a half years that constitute the tribulation, the great. Hey Philippses, hey Megalei. The great tribulation that Jesus speaks of in Matthew chapter 24, Luke chapter 22 and elsewhere.

And that's referred to in the prophets as the time of Jacob's trouble, the time of Jacob's trouble. So we're pretty sure that the seals, trumpets and bowls all take place in that period, right? So if the seals, trumpets and bowls, those sets of sevens pertain to a time that is dealing with the age of Israel, people who are believers and come to faith at that time are going to be assigned to Israel. They will be assigned to 12 tribes.

They are the 144,000 who receive the protective mark before the final judgments fall. All of that pertains to Israel, right? Now, what did I say the book opens with in chapter two and three?

Letters to whom? Seven churches. You would not expect there to be a link between seven churches, churches, church age, versus sevens that pertain to the culmination of judgment and the introduction of the cleansing and purification of the earth that is gonna precede God's fulfillment of his earthly promises to Israel.

The vengeance that God claims as his own is going to be perpetrated on the enemies of Israel primarily in that set of judgments. And it takes place during the age of Israel. So I would not personally spend much time trying to find a way to line up the seven churches with the seals, trumpets, thunders and bowls any more than I would try to line up the seven spirits of God with them.

They partake of a different place. The seven spirits are heavenly. The seven churches are part of this age.

But we are going to see, there's sort of a famous conservative evangelical belief that after the letters in chapters two and three, when a voice is heard speaking to John saying, come up here in chapter four, verse one, that this suggests the rapture. And then you do not see the church again until chapter 19. And it's a loose way of saying that this is all about Israel and that's fine.

But you actually do see the church on multiple occasions. You see the white robe throng from every race, creed, language and nation before the throne. And these of course are the raptured saints from the church age in heaven while these judgment events are taking place on earth.

And we're going to see tonight that there are two entire chapters in my view. Of course, everything I say is my view. So you can take it with the appropriate level of seriousness.

But in my view, there are two entire chapters in the book of Revelation often overlooked that pertain to the church. And we're going to look at that now because I think it's important before we do our detailed study of the sixes and sevens. The sixth seal, the sixth trumpet, sixth bowl, seventh seal, seventh trumpet, seventh bowl.

We've looked at the first five and in some cases six in great detail. But the culmination of that week, the final earthquake and the events that surround it, that judgment with Armageddon and the awful judgment such as not been seen in history, including the flood is going to be the subject of our study next time. But I want to look at something in the meantime because I think it's important for our perspective and to help solidify our understanding of where things pertain to the church and where things pertain to Israel.

So we're going to begin since most of the book of Revelation deals with this 70th week of Daniel and with the age of Israel in looking at two chapters that summarize the entire history of Israel. Fascinating chapters. And this is chapter 12 and chapter 13.

We've looked at this briefly in recent weeks, but we're going to look at it in a little more detail

because this is one half of our study. These two chapters deal with Israel. Then we're going to look at two chapters that deal with the church.

And I'm going to compare these two sections because I think they invite comparison. The other two chapters, if you flip a few pages over, are chapter 17 and 18. You may have enough navigational memory of Revelation to remember what those chapters deal with.

That is the Scarlet Woman. And I'm going to suggest to you that in my humble opinion, and I haven't really looked around to see if anybody agrees with me or not, this just has emerged as I've been reading and evaluating the structure of the book. But you will notice the chapters 12 and 13 picture the people of God in the Old Testament age as a woman.

And this is primarily Israel. So this is a woman in chapter 12, verse one, clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head, a garland of 12 stars. Clothed with the sun.

The moon under her feet. And I think that this is suggestive. I wouldn't die for this, but you think, well, why the sun and the moon? A, it is a heavenly connection.

And Israel in the Old Testament are the people of God. And they are connected to heaven and the glory of God. There is no greater glory in the heavens as viewed from the earth than the sun.

And this woman is clothed with that sun. And she's got the moon under her feet. And what would that suggest to you? I think you can maybe see the same thing I see in it.

Why the moon? What does the moon define for us here? It's our months, right? You go through a lunar cycle and it's basically one month. And Israel's feasts are tied to the lunar calendar, tied to those months. And so you have the sun as the clothing, the glory of God as the clothing for this woman.

And the moon is under her feet. The foundation is God's law, which is visually expressed in the observance of feasts and days and so on. So this is manifestly the Old Testament age in general pictured as Israel in particular, the nation, the people, God's chosen, the descendants of Abraham.

When you go to chapter 17 and 18, you have a different entity also represented by a woman. But this is not the same woman of chapters 12 and 13. And in the same way that in the introduction to this woman of chapter 12 and 13, her appearance immediately gives us the clue as to her identity.

The woman in chapter 17 is a harlot who sits on many waters with whom the kings of the earth commit fornication and the inhabitants of the earth are made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and 10 horns, sitting on it in a position to control it, to dominate it, to keep it in check, right? The woman is arrayed in purple and

scarlet and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of the fornication of the earth.

And anytime you see a text note in Revelation that says the N-U text or the M text, you have a choice. And Revelation has a troubled text in a number of places. And I think the reading of the new King James is better here, full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication, period.

So it doesn't make a hill of beans of difference. The fornication is with the kings of the earth. So if it's fornication of the earth, but there is the connection here.

And so where the woman of Revelation 12 has under her feet the moon, which represents God's schedule, God's law, God's defining of her function. And on that, she stands. This woman is seated, not standing.

And this beast is not under her feet. She's riding the beast. And when you ride a beast, there is a sense of cooperation.

You dominate it, but you turn it to your own ends. You ride a horse, you ride a donkey, you ride a mule or a burrow or whatever. You have enough power to make that beast submissive and to direct its power for your own ends.

So as you can see, I'm going to suggest that chapters 12 and 13, give us a panoramic view of Israel. It's very clear because it begins in the Old Testament days when the woman is first defined with this clothing and with the moon under her feet and so on. And then she has this garland of 12 stars, which of course is indicative of the 12 tribes of Israel.

And then you have generations and generations and generations of history culminating in Israel, giving birth to the male child, which is the Lord Jesus. Well, if 12 and 13 are a woman representing Israel and it's giving us a panoramic view, this gives us a great interpretive clue when we come to chapter 17 and 18, and we are looking at this woman who is manifestly not Israel, but contains within her identity, within her entity or her corporate existence, the people of God. And we know this because God's people are going to be called out of her.

Look at chapter 18, verse four. I heard a voice from heaven saying, come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins. So the people of God are in this woman and are called out so that they do not share in her sins, i.e. the judgment upon her sins.

For her sins have reached to heaven and God has remembered her iniquities, rendered to her just as she rendered and repay her double according to her works. In the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. And so you get the idea that the people of God are within this woman, are called out, and then are actually returning and visiting upon her judgment in recompense for what she has actually done to them in her own midst.

So very interesting. And in the same way that we have a very strong and almost unmistakable clue as to the Revelation 12 and 13 woman by her garland of 12 stars with the sun and the moon and so on, and she gives birth to the male child and she's persecuted by Satan and so on. Very clearly Israel.

Once we start looking at the clues here, we have a very clear identification of this woman as well. And that's in verse five, on her forehead a name was written, mystery. What defines the church age? What is Paul the apostle of? He is the revealer of the mystery, which was hidden in the councils of God until it was given to Paul.

Mystery. Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and the abominations of the earth. Now, this is kind of scary because if the 17 and 18 woman here, chapter 17 and 18 is the church, on the analogy of chapters 12 and 13, we would expect that these chapters are going to give us a panorama across the history of the church age and it is going to culminate pretty much at the same point that the history of the revelation chapter 12 and 13 woman does, which is in the judgment of this time and detailed in this book.

So that's where we're going tonight. We're going to look at the woman in revelation 12 and 13 because we know more about this woman. We've got the history of the old Testament and the new Testament to guide us and we interpret more difficult passages in the light of more clear ones.

So let's clarify in our own minds, the nature of the description, the nature of the communication about the woman representing Israel in chapters 12 and 13. And then in our second session, when we look at chapter 17 and 18, this is going to give us some experience and a guide in interpreting this later portion. So that's a map of where we are and where we're going.

If you turn back now to chapter 12, let's cover this rather quickly here. And now a great sign appeared in heaven. Notice that the origin is in heaven.

The woman clothed with the sun, 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. And you get the idea that God created the nation of Israel for multiple purposes, but none more important than being the source of the Messiah to Israel and the savior of all men.

This is the means by which the promise to Abraham that through him all nations of the earth would be blessed is going to be fulfilled. So she's being with child, crying out in labor and in pain to give birth. Another sign appeared in heaven.

Behold, a great fiery red dragon having seven heads and 10 horns and seven diadems on his heads. This we know is Satan in general, but Satan's manifestation of his presence and power on the earth. What form does he take? What method does he use to pursue his goals and his priorities and his objectives on the earth? He doesn't walk around with a red epidermis and a

pointed tail and a forked tongue and a pitchfork and whatnot.

His manifestation on the earth is gonna be in the exercise of power. These are the heads and the horns. And more about those upcoming.

So 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.

And her child was caught up to God and his throne. The entire content of all four gospels is distilled in this one verse. Jesus was born in Israel to be the Messiah to Israel and the ruler of all nations.

And at the end of his earthly ministry, he was caught up to God and God's throne where he is seated at God's right hand as we know. So notice the elimination of details that are not pertinent to the purpose of the vision. We don't have Jesus' miracles.

We don't have his crucifixion. We don't have the preaching of the kingdom. We are looking primarily to establish the identity of the woman more so than the child.

The child is described just enough to help us understand who the woman is. So the woman fled into the wilderness where she has a place prepared by God that they should feed her there 1,260 days. This is three and a half years.

This is going to be a multi-part vision. And just as we have seen that the seals, trumpets, and bowls have a large overlap and are different perspectives on the same time period, I'm going to offer you the thought that the same thing is happening here. And we're going to back and fill a little bit in time.

So the woman is shielded for 1,260 days. Now in verse seven, war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought with the dragon and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.

So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old called the devil and Satan who deceives the whole world. He was cast to the earth and his angels were cast out with him. Then, verse 10, I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, now salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ have come.

For the accuser of our brethren who accused them before our God day and night has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them, woe to the inhabitants of the earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you having great wrath because he knows that he has a short time.

Now, verse 13, when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male. Child is added for clarification. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness to her place where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time from the presence of the serpent.

A time, times and half a time, we understand these times to be years. So that's a year, two years and a half a year, which is three and a half years, the same period of time spoken of in verse six. So we've backed up a little bit, but not much.

What is the upshot of all of this? It seems clear from chapter 12 of Revelation that Satan is not cast out of heaven to the earth until the middle of the 70th week. That is when the woman flees to the wilderness and she has a place prepared by God and she is sustained there for that final three and a half years. Notice that verse 13, when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman, but the woman is given a means of escape where she is nourished for three and a half years.

So this casting out of Satan, not to say that he hasn't fallen, not to say that he has lost some privileges, but he still has access to heaven. In Old Testament days, this is why he can come to the council in Job chapter one and chapter two and talk with God. Where have you come from? I've come from walking around in the earth.

Jesus can say Satan is roaming the earth seeking whom he may devour, but he is not fully cast out of heaven in this sense and enraged until the middle of the tribulation period. That's my understanding of what it is telling us here in the first part of chapter 12. The serpent spews water out of his mouth like a flood in verse 15, after the woman that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood.

The earth helps the woman, the earth opens its mouth and swallows up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. And the dragon is enraged with the woman and went to make war with the rest of her offspring who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. Now, the ancient Israelites did not have the testimony of Jesus Christ unless you wanna say that it was in prophetic form.

This seems to be confined to the latter part of Daniel 70th week, which this book concerns itself with. So, keeping the commandments of God and having the testimony of Jesus or Jesus Christ, there's a text variant there, not serious, indicates that these are age of Israel believers, but they are after the time of Christ. So these are those who have come to Christ.

This is the 144,000 servants of God and they're in dire straits. The woman is protected and nourished, but the dragon is off to attack the individuals, the woman, the entity overall, the corporate entity is preserved from him. So he's having to try to attack the components, the individuals, her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus.

Well, then in, so what can we observe here as we look at this description? This woman's history begins even before the age of the church. It begins in past time and extends across the appearance of the Lord Jesus in his first advent and then continues and expands and is detailed in times. Then in chapter 13, John says, I'm standing on the stand of the sea and I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and 10 horns or the other way around and on his heads, a blasphemous name.

We talked about this blasphemous name last time. What does it mean to have blasphemous names? And blasphemy is putting evil for good and calling good evil. To blaspheme is to deceptively swap good and evil.

You can be accused of blasphemy. Jesus was accused of blasphemy. He was saying good things, but the Pharisees said he blasphemes.

He's putting sheep's clothing on a wolf and presenting it to the people. He's a blasphemer. Actual blasphemy is dressing up evil as good.

And this is what Satan has done from the first time he spoke to Eve in the garden in the guise of the serpent. And you get the idea that the dragon is actually serpent that has regrown its legs and is trying to reverse the curse. And that's why he's a dragon.

A dragon is always a snake-like creature with legs. And so the beast, which I saw, verse two of chapter 13, is like a leopard. Notice he has feet like the feet of a bear.

So the beast is a snake with bear feet. And he's fast like a leopard, has a mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne and great authority for this beast with seven heads and 10 horns.

In other cases, the beast is Satan. And you saw that in the previous chapter. But now we're gonna get more detail.

And the beast is actually Satan's projection of power on the earth. And so the dragon, who himself is seven heads and 10 horns identified, but this is the manifestation of Satan in the end times. One of these heads seems to have been mortally wounded, but the deadly wound is healed.

In verse three, all the world marveled and followed the beast. This takes place exclusively and only in the 70th week of Daniel. So we've got a quick overview leading to the much more detailed revelation in the end times.

So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast and they worshiped the beast. This is kind of like true worship of God, the father, as we worship the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is the fullness of deity and bodily form.

If you've seen me, you've seen the father. Well, this is the anti Christ and people worship both him and his power source, his originator, who is Satan. So Satan has basically in this endeavor fulfilled the five I wills.

I will be like the most high. I will have a proxy on earth through whom I will be worshiped and my proxy will be worshiped and my proxy will be the very image of me. Have the seven heads, have the 10 horns, have the crowns.

And so you see the close identification here. Verse five, he's given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies. He's gonna say a lot of wonderful sounding things that are sugar-coated evil, are gift-wrapped wickedness.

And he's given authority to continue for 42 months. So he opens his mouth in blasphemy against God to blaspheme his name, his tabernacle and those who dwell in heaven. Why? He's gonna say that was legendary.

That was mythical. That was benighted old beliefs. I am the real deal.

Watch me, listen to me. That's in a dusty old book. I'm in the here and now.

I am doing miracles now. I am speaking great things now. I am worthy to be worshiped now.

And so he is going to, in doing so, he's gonna blaspheme the true God, both his name, his tabernacle and those who dwell in heaven. And I suspect that those who dwell in heaven are not so much the angels as the raptured saints. He's gonna give an explanation that sounds good as to why they disappeared.

Just a guess. It was granted him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. Notice, sometimes God will allow, it is granted for there to be a temporary advance, a temporary victory.

This is why we have genuine Christian martyrs. This is why you have the church in Smyrna. There are times when, for the glory of God, it is granted to us to suffer for his name.

Only believers that can handle this are granted this privilege. Don't worry that you're going to be tested above what you are able to bear because we do look at this and make application. There are some believers who suffer for the glory of God.

It's nothing to be afraid of. It should not strike fear in our hearts because this is our loving heavenly father. And the only analogy I've ever thought of that makes sense to me to explain this is if you've ever been a parent and had to take your child to the doctor to have a broken bone set, to have stitches inflicted, to have painful procedures.

I remember one of the first times for me, I'd gotten hit in the face with a baseball bat and one of my baby teeth was broken off up at the roots and it turned dark gray and it was starting to fester

and sponsor an infection. So I had to go in and have this tooth pulled. Well, this is my own parents subjecting me to something extremely unpleasant.

I didn't like strangers to begin with and here I am in the power of strangers who are doing hurtful things to me. And you might be tempted to be afraid and say, parents, why are you doing this? But they know so much more than their child and they understand that a momentary light affliction is working an eternal weight of glory. So think of it that way.

To the extent that God allows affliction and suffering into our lives, don't fear it. It is measured, it is monitored, it is carefully adjusted so that we can succeed and we can prevail and we can improvise, adapt and overcome as we like to say in the Marine Corps. And as overcomers, we have a chance to reflect God's glory in unique and wonderful ways that will redound to the glory of Christ and the glory of the Father for all eternity.

It is a momentary light affliction. So in verse seven, granted to make war with the saints, these are the tribulation saints. These are the servants of God, the 144,000.

And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue and nation. All who dwell on the earth worship him whose names have not been written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Anyone has an ear to hear, let him hear.

Notice the harking back to the injunction, the exhortation at the end of each of the letters to the seven churches. If you have an ear to hear, listen. He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity.

He who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here's the patience and the faith of the saints. By exposing the saints and drawing out the predators and allowing them to manifest their evil, this seals their judgment.

God's people will be rescued. They will be honored. They will be blessed.

They will be protected to the maximum extent, even as they are allowed to be victims in a temporary victory for the beast. But this seals their fate. And the application is, do not fear hardship.

Don't be of a complaining spirit and a spirit that draws back unto perdition. Faith and patience inherits the promises. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

Specifically here, the tribulation saints, in the same way that we look at the Old Testament, observe, interpret, and apply. Look at these future Old Testament saints, if you will, observe, interpret, and apply. Sometimes it seems as though the world has achieved a victory.

The fallen nature of circumstances, whether it's health or economic or opposition from people, it looks like they won. It was granted to oppose the saints and to overcome them. It's granted.

God allows it. Look at Job. It's all you have to remember.

Do you think Job would say, if I had to do over again, I really wouldn't go through what God put me through? Do you think Job and his wife think it was worth it after all? Of course. Your life is an eternal witness to the power and the grace and the glory of God. And you have a fulsome reward for the inconvenience.

That's the way God works. Well, this is the first woman, the woman of Revelation 12 and 13. We're gonna pause and take our break.

And when we come back, we're going to look at the second woman pictured in the book of Revelation, which represents very interestingly and very pertinently for us, the church. We'll pause here and take our break. We'll be right back.