

Rev 26-03-04a

Greetings, welcome to Grace and Truth Bible Church. On a Wednesday night, this is the 4th of March, 2026. We continue our study in the book of Revelation.

We're in chapter 12, right at the end, getting ready to enter into chapter 13. Let's go to the Lord and ask his blessing on our time of fellowship and studying. We'll begin.

Father, what a privilege it is to spend this time together. We thank you for the opportunity. We pray that the Holy Spirit will bless your word to each of our hearts.

May it be a spiritual communion that makes us more aware of your presence and the presence of our Savior as the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth. We thank you in Jesus' name, amen. We have seen in chapter 12, the great sign in heaven of the woman who is in travail and gives birth to the male child who is to rule with a rod of iron.

There's a wonderful study you can do on the rod of iron and the shattering of the nations in pieces, like a potter's vessel. This takes you to Psalm 2 and to Jeremiah and to the potter making something out of the clay. You end up in Romans.

The potter and the clay are closely related to the rod of iron because the rod of iron is typically depicted along with these vessels. I just want to point out, we don't have it mentioned here, so I'm not going to do a detailed study, but keep in mind when you think of the rod of iron breaking in pieces the potter's vessels, then you go back and look at the potter and the clay, especially Romans. When you're in chapter nine, can the Lord not make from the same clay vessels for honor and for dishonor? Here's what to remember.

When the potter is working with the clay, it is malleable. It can be made into one thing or made into another. In the initial look, the clay spoils in the potter's hand.

The clay will not conform to the shape that the potter is trying to give it. And so he says, well, if you're that kind of clay, I'll make something else. If you don't have the integrity to stand up and be a vase, then I'll make something flat out of you.

I will make a different kind of vessel. The point being in the early part of the process when the potter is working with the clay, there is malleability and there is potential. And the clay will, in this figure, determine what the potter makes out of it.

If it responds to his ministrations, it can be a wonderful vessel of honor. If it's clay that doesn't want to behave, then he'll make something, he's going to make something out of it. By the time you get to the rod of iron, he's not going and pushing the potter out of the way and beating wet clay.

The potter's vessels have been fired. They have a shape that is not going to change. And the vessels of wrath that are fitted for destruction are the ones that will be shattered in pieces by

the rod of iron.

This is clay after the opportunity to be molded, then it is fired and it is set. So there are implications in that for free will, for there being a window of opportunity after which your decisions have pretty much determined your fate. Something to think about.

So the rod of iron is mentioned here in connection with the child. It didn't have to be. We want to take a moment and understand.

And I heard someone use a curious phrase the other day, but you pay attention when a dog barks. And then sometimes you pay attention when it is the dog that does not bark. And it reminds me of traveling through the word of God.

And there are things that are mentioned and there are things that are omitted. And it is all intentional. It is purposeful.

And it is designed to lead us into the truth, to reveal the truth to us. So it is not an accident that the child is the one that is to rule with a rod of iron in verse five of chapter 12. Her child was caught up to God and his throne.

I also want to mention in passing that there are various interpretations and I am respectful of the observations and understandings that others have in these passages. They are potentially understandable in other ways. I just want to give you one example of this.

When you read the first part of chapter 12, what do you see? Here's the woman. She's got the garland of 12 stars. This is probably Israel.

It could be the apostles, but the sun and the moon. And she's going to give birth to a child. We don't think of the church as giving birth.

The church is normally more pictured and understood as the virgin bride of Christ, that she should be holy and without blemish and so on. We don't think of there being something birthed by the church. We do understand the seed of the woman crushing the serpent and that seed is Christ in Genesis three that we saw before.

So as you come into this figure, it seems pretty obvious, but let me give you a quick alternate understanding from one of my favorite resources, which is the New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge. So on verse five, and it comes to the word man-child. It says, well, she brings forth in Isaiah 66, verse seven, before she was in labor, she gave birth.

Before her pain came, she delivered a male child. This woman is pictured as laboring and having pain. You could wonder about that.

But here's what it says when you come to man-child. Interpreters vary widely in their understanding of who the man-child is. This surprised me.

How is the man-child not Christ? He is to rule with a rod of iron. We're done, right? Many believe this verse is retrospective and that the man-child refers to the birth of Christ. More probably, in the opinion of our editor for the NTSK, more probably the man-child refers to a group of resurrected saints.

This is given in Peter's and his commentary called the Theocratic Kingdom, volume two, page 285. J. Finnis Drake has argued ably that the group of saints involved are the 144,000 of chapter seven. This is why it's fun to listen when others speak and have a different perspective.

This would have never crossed the shadowless landscape of my mind. But that the man-child is the 144,000 of chapter seven. This group is found in heaven in chapter 14.

This passage appears to provide the rapture that brought them there. That this is not a reference to Christ seems evident. Not to me, but to him.

For this occurs in the section past Revelation 4.1, which has to do with future events. Christ's ascension did not occur in the middle of Daniel's 70th week. The basis for identifying the man-child with Christ is that he was born of a woman.

But in this passage, the woman is Israel, not Mary, for it is Israel that is predicted to flee for protection into the wilderness. That the man-child is to rule with a rod of iron is taken by many to indicate that this is a reference to Christ, for he will do so. But scripture clearly shows that Christ, Psalm 2, verse eight, the man-child, Revelation 12.5, the church saints, Revelation 2, 26 and 27, tribulation saints in Revelation 24 through six, and indeed all the saints, Psalm 149, six through nine, are to so rule.

That list, which may have seemed confusing as it was being delivered, check this out. You have access to the new treasury of scripture knowledge in a lot of places. But what he's saying is many more entities are said to rule than just Christ.

And so again, not only Christ, in Psalm 2, eight, this man-child, in our passage, verse five, church saints, back in the letters to the churches where it was quoted, he shall rule with a rod of iron, that's Revelation 2, 26 and 27, tribulation saints in Revelation 20. Remember, when you get to 20, after the appearance of Christ, you have the great white throne. And we understand the length of the millennial kingdom from Revelation chapter 20, where the saints who are raised rule with Christ for a thousand years.

Revelation 24 through six, all the saints in Psalm 149, six through nine are said to so rule. So this does not necessarily indicate that the man-child is Christ. It also gives you Exodus 13, 12, which says, set apart to the Lord, all that opened the womb, that is every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have, the males shall be the Lords.

And the 144,000 are tied back to this idea of the firstborn, Isaiah 66, seven, that we've already quoted. So don't be surprised, alarmed, confused, when you see or hear alternate understandings and interpretation of Revelation. This is not the easiest book in the Bible to

understand.

And if you hear someone looking at it from a different angle, it's worth paying attention. How do you know who's right? Do I become unsettled and lose my peace if maybe I'm not understanding it like this other person is or vice versa? Remember the rule, and it is so important. Nowhere, no more important than when we go through this book.

God, the Holy Spirit is our teacher. He is the one who leads us into truth and the truth that pertains. We want the truth that God imparts to us that transforms us by the renewing of our minds, Romans 12, one and two.

This is what allows us to present ourselves a living sacrifice, sanctified and acceptable to God. This is our reasonable service. It's what we're supposed to do.

So I don't always pray, Lord, give me the perfect, accurate understanding of this passage. My prayer is that I and we understand the truth that God wants us to know that will enable us to live in the light, to walk in the light, to be faithful and obedient and be useful and good and faithful servants. Sometimes people may misunderstand a passage, but God will use their misunderstanding to accomplish something important in their life or in the life of others.

So it's not that we should panic if we don't think we've got the sterling, pristine, correct understanding. It's more important to answer the question, how should we then live? I believe for reasons that we've already seen, the woman is Israel. We saw the sun, moon and stars in Genesis, the chapter 37 episode with Joseph speaking to his brothers and ultimately to his father and the Abraham and Isaac and Israel motif there the woman is clearly identified.

Then the male child, she could have given birth to a crowd and it would be the 144,000, but it's a male child and he is caught up to heaven. And I think one of the reasons I'm kind of going the long way around the tree here is I believe it is important to recognize that this is not a chronological sequential account from chapter four through chapter 20 and 21 and 22 that these are sequential. This alternate view assumes that you have the seals, then you have the trumpets, then you have the bowls and therefore whatever happened back in the earlier chapters precedes any chapter we are in now.

I don't believe that to be the case. I think we are in a heavenly perspective come up here and I will show you and we are released from the strictures of time and conventional sequence and can mine the past to understand the future. That said, we saw in the closing portion of this that the woman is preserved, two wings of an eagle.

We have seen deliverance for Israel in other passages pictured similarly to this. And this results then in war in heaven and the casting out of Satan. And again, if you're trying to take this chronologically, when is Satan cast out of heaven? Did it happen before Adam and Eve? Does it happen when Jesus sends out his disciples and Jesus says, I saw Satan fall like lightning? Again, I think it's helpful to look at prophecy and prophetic speaking as a pattern and patterns can

repeat, patterns can be fulfilled in various ways.

So when this war in heaven takes place, we have a fulsome description of Satan. And I just want to review this real quickly. Starting in verse seven, Michael and his angels fought with the dragon.

The dragon and his angels fought. Satan is described in three ways here. They did not prevail, nor was place found for them in heaven any longer.

So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, dragon and serpent, called the devil and Satan, that's fourfold, who deceives the whole world. He was cast to the earth and his angels were cast out with him. I would suggest that this description of Satan who deceives the whole world.

War takes place in heaven and Satan and his angels, the dragon, the serpent, the devil does not prevail, but he is described as the one who deceives. We saw that he issues flood water out of his mouth after the woman, once the battle is lost. In verse 13, dragon saw he was cast to the earth.

He persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male, but the woman was given two wings and she might fly in the wilderness. So the serpent, verse 15, spewed water out of his mouth. You remember our study on things that come out of the mouth, fire coming forth.

And here's my suggestion. In a lot of cases, when spiritual warfare is in view, it is a war of words. There is argument, there is debate.

When Satan took the Lord Jesus into the wilderness to tempt him and to endeavor to derail him and his ministry before it ever gets underway, what kind of conflict is that? What kind of opposition does Satan present to the Lord Jesus? It's verbal. The devil takes him to a high mountain and shows him the kingdoms of the world and says, all these can be yours. It is a war of ideas.

It is a war of words. It is conflicting viewpoint and it is quite intense, but the weapons of our warfare are powerful to the pulling down of strongholds, scripture says. The sword of the spirit is the word of God.

The armor is all related to truth contained in that word, the shield of faith, helmet of salvation, breastplate of righteousness, waist gird with the truth, feet shod with the gospel. It is the truth that is at issue. And the conflict, when we wage warfare in the spiritual realm, we wrestle not against flesh and blood.

It's not a material war to be won. As you see wars and military conflicts unfold between armies and between nations, you think who's got the better weaponry, who can outlast whom in terms of ammunition and supply and so on. But we are looking at conflict in the spiritual dimensions.

And I would suggest to you that however literal this gets during the 70th week and the great tribulation in terms of actual conflict and armed forces going forth and killing one another, what we take from this, this entire chapter that we've seen and all that precedes it, the demons that spew fire out of their mouths, the struggle began when the serpent spoke to Eve out of the tree. So my suggestion is when you think of this conflict and that which issues forth from the mouth, even the warfare in heaven, I asked the question a session or two back, what would this look like? Are there angel weapons? Have they got lightsabers? Or do they hack away at each other with the equivalent of earthly swords and spears and shields and chariots? The prophets of old would have the revelation of the chariots and horsemen of the Lord ranged on the field. You remember this? But in reality, what is at issue? Satan's fall detailed for us and his problems in heaven in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 are ideas.

I will raise my throne above the stars. I will be like the most high. And our salvation depends on what we choose.

We don't have to fight a battle. We don't have to climb a mountain or ford a stream. The spiritual life is in the realm of ideas and choices.

Does the dragon's tail literally knock a third of the stars out of heaven? Or does the result of his argument sway a third of the angels into believing that his way is better than God's way? This war in heaven that we see depicted in Revelation chapter 12 may well be a conflict in terms of debate. And I'm not trying to water down the scripture. It is a war.

But the weapons of our warfare are not material. Our armament and our defense is not material. We know this.

And if we apply it here in this last great revelation of scripture, it's very possible that these are metaphors describing the conflict between those who want to love and serve God and appreciate Him and His righteousness and His authorship of life and light and those who are determined to go a different way, who reject that. And this conflict is a propaganda war, a war of debates, such as we see happen every two years when elections come around. And it can lead to, it can motivate and propel violent conflict that actually results in people being grabbed out of their seats and escorted out of the hall or worse.

Violent rhetoric is being talked about now in our own nation for its motivating effect on fringe elements who want to turn a war of ideas into the death of those that they disagree with. So as we leave chapter 12 and enter chapter 13, this great set of signs in the sky, the great sign is the woman and her male child. The other sign is the dragon who is in opposition, who wants to devour.

Satan wasn't poised to literally eat the Lord Jesus when he was born. This is metaphor. So how far removed from the simplicity of the metaphor do we go? Maybe we need to go just a little bit further and understand that this conflict in chapter 12 is our conflict.

We are being attacked with ideas and with deceptions and persuasions and temptations to diminish our faith in God, to depart from the narrow road and to not be so concerned about entering the straight gate because, well, what about this piece of fruit? I can eat it now and I've got a shortcut to wisdom in the same way that Satan offered the Lord Jesus a shortcut to a kingdom. And we are often, and this is our point of application here in summary, we are often presented with a shortcut. You'll have more money if you cheat on your taxes.

You can avoid accountability if you shade the truth or twist it or omit parts of it. And you don't have to be completely honest. Satan, the dragon, the devil, the serpent is primarily described here as the one who deceives.

This is the way walk ye in it and it's not. It seems right, but it leads to death. This is our challenge day by day.

The warfare pictured in heaven here is happening in and around us now. How are we going to prevail? How are we going to cast out of our domain that which threatens to undo us? I'm thinking of a mighty fortress is our God. If you go back and review those words, there's your phrase, threatens to undo us.

Keep it in mind as you review this, whatever is going to happen, whatever the sequence, what does it mean when the woman is taken to her place for three and a half years, a time, times and half a time? What are the principles? What is the prophetic pattern that pertains even to us? The woman does not fight and the child does not fight. The dragon, there is a time and a place to confront, to oppose and to defeat with spiritual force of arms, but it's not always. It doesn't say here's the woman in travail and here comes the dragon.

So the woman was handed a great sword with which she slew the dragon. The woman is passive. She is brought to the point of childbirth in the plan and purpose of God.

It goes back to Genesis, in sorrow, shalt thou bring forth. She doesn't fight. The male child presented as an infant, it doesn't say that he grew up and became a man and put on his armor and went forth to fight the dragon.

He is born, he is protected and he is caught up to God's throne where he is out of reach. War breaks out in heaven and it is Michael who is specifically given the task. My application point here is not all of us are going to be Michael marshaling the forces to go forth in the war of ideas.

You don't have to be a debater. You don't have to try to silence those who have poor judgment, bad arguments or misconstruing world events or the word of God. We are not all angels in the conflict.

Using the terminology here. Many times we are something else. There is the prophet during the famine and then there is the woman with the flower and the crews of oil.

The prophet does one thing, the woman does another. Her son plays a different role in being brought back from the dead. That we have places to occupy.

This is why we are encouraged about spiritual gifts. So why are we given Revelation chapter 12? It is fascinating to anticipate what may happen in the future, especially with Israel and divine protection for them. But the application for us is there is a conflict and our enemy is the devil, the dragon and his minions, which will be represented by the man of sin as we get into chapter 13.

And we are about to see the incarnation on earth and the agent that will act on behalf of Satan in the material human sphere. And we sometimes face those, but we have to know our place. Am I one who is called to study and teach? Am I one that is called to evangelize? Am I one that is called to simply be a beacon of light and brighten the corner where I am? What has God called me to? What has he equipped me for? What has he gifted me in? That is my role in the conflict.

And in most cases, this is a conflict of, here is a presentation of viewpoint or argument or understanding, what are you going to choose and how are you going to live? The conflict in Revelation 12 is just as real in your life as it is in my life. And we sometimes miss it. Our circumstances change, our health changes, our economics change, our job changes, our location changes, our family changes, people come and people go.

In the birth and death cycle that is dominant for all of us, the situation changes and we think, how did this happen? Why am I in this position of stress or challenge? I was engaged in things and now I've been moved in some fashion and I'm no longer engaged in that. The question is, is it time for me to take up the sword and swing it? Is it time for me to stand fast and be a bastion of stability and faith to whom others can look and see Christ in us and peace in us and be drawn and ask us a reason for our hope? There's no two of us in the same circumstance, but all of us are called to the same purpose and it is to not be deceived. What we sow is what we're going to reap.

If we sow to our flesh, we'll reap corruption. If we sow to the spirit, we reap life everlasting. The God of this world blinds the minds of those who are faithless.

It says who believe not, we think, oh, the unbelievers are blinded. It's apostasia, those who are faithless and Satan can blind believers and does. And we see it all around us.

The challenge is not to think about physical armed struggle. The challenge is to not be deceived, to not be blinded, to not be led astray, to not think we are pleasing God when we're not. This is why you see so many who find their faith falling short because they weren't doing it right to begin with.

And so then they deconstruct and they blame the church and they reconstruct a different kind of faith that is unbiblical, but it suits them. And they recreate God as an idol, a God in the image

that they would like him to fit. And there are people who change faiths completely.

We've just seen in recent days, someone who is extremely well-known in the Protestant denominational world and has changed his mind and decided he's going to be a Catholic now. And if there's anybody that has enough training, seminary degrees, and a lot of experience and travel within the expositional, interpretational world with scripture, you would think that that would protect you from that. But you can be deceived.

Be not deceived. Let no one deceive you. You do a concordance study on that.

We are told over and over again that this conflict that is depicted with dragons and women and eagles wings and angels in heaven is a battle for our souls. A battle for our minds, a battle for our hearts, a battle that is attacking our faith in God, our hope and trust through Jesus Christ. Don't let that go unprotected.

Don't let it be co-opted. Don't let it be surprised and victimized by a rear guard action. This is why we're in Bible class.

This is why you're here tonight is to have the word of God and put on the full armor so that this largely symbolic and metaphorical conflict, which is real, doesn't make us a casualty. That said, the dragon was enraged in verse 17 with the woman and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus. And we saw what it is to have the testimony, to embody it, to hang onto it.

It doesn't say to preach the testimony to all of those who are good evangelists. But again, the summary of this chapter is here. And in closing out chapter 12, I wanna give you one final thing.

Notice that the war is against the offspring. And there is a sense in which the church is the offspring of Israel, in that we wouldn't be here if it were not for God's dealings with Israel. Our savior is from the seed and stock of Israel in the line of David.

Our first generation of the church were converted Jews. And this should have nipped antisemitism in the bud, but it didn't. But look at what he does.

The dragon, who was the serpent in verse 15, he's back to being a dragon in verse 17. He's enraged with the woman. This is an attitude of frustration, anger, bitterness, and wrath.

He is enraged. He's got a visceral, emotional, intense dislike for the offspring, the seed. The word here is sperma, the seed of the woman.

And he goes to make war with the remainder of them, the remnant of them, and specifically those who keep the commandment of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. Keeping the commandments. This is faithfulness and obedience.

And that is a testimony. As my dad said in one of his hymns, "Your life will be your witness." Your life is your testimony. And when you have Christ, when you have his words and keep them

and express love for him in that way, he comes and makes his home with us, as does the father and the Holy Spirit's already there.

And your life will truly be your witness. So if you keep the commandments of God, and if you have the testimony of Jesus, you can expect spiritual opposition, which has been graphically portrayed for us in an almost storybook fashion, mythological fashion, the conflict of the woman and the beast. But we, in a sense, are the seed of the woman.

We are the body of Christ. And going into Catholicism from being a Protestant on the basis of misunderstanding what that means and believing that there is some sort of material transubstantiation is to miss the spiritual point. And we don't wanna look at this chapter and miss the spiritual point.

Our faithfulness and obedience will result in conflict with the dragon, the serpent, the devil, Satan. And his means of warfare is to endeavor to deceive and persuade us to abandon our faith, to think that we're no longer pertinent or relevant. God's busy elsewhere.

I can't join God in his work and experience him. These are deceptions. They are deflections.

They are useful diversions to prevent us from being effective and accomplishing God's plan and purpose in our life. So watch for that. My final thought here as we go to the break is look at chapter 13, verse one.

In your New King James, it says, then I stood on the sand of the sea. You have a text note there that says, I in the Nestle Allen UBS text says, he, not first person, but third person. This is third person.

New King James got it wrong. Interpreters that think this is John standing on the sea, I'm sorry, they got it wrong. Be sure you correct it.

It is he. And draw a line and loop this up. This is the closing verse of chapter 12.

Not the beginning chapter of chapter 13. And I do that, you know, the chapters and verses weren't there in the earliest forms of the text. They are helpful.

But if we want to help ourselves, loop this up as the last verse. This ought to be verse 18 of chapter 12, because he, the reference for that pronoun is the dragon, the enraged dragon who is trying to track down and make war with the remainder of her seed. He is the one who stands on the sand of the sea.

We're transitioning now from what he is doing to the seed of the woman, to what he is going to do with the first beast. And his agency in bringing forth the man of sin, often loosely called the Antichrist, is transitioned here by the dragon pictured as standing on the sand of the sea. There's nothing to be gained by John's standing on the sand, but there's a lot to be gained, as we will see, from seeing where the dragon is.

And we'll see that when we come back from the break.