

The Study of the Book of Revelation

The Church in the Wilderness

Chapter 12

REVIEW:

In our last study out of Revelation, we looked at Chapter 11. We saw in more detail about prophecies that were to happen around the end of the 1260 years in 1798. We learned...

1)... the parallels between the Judgment or measuring of the temple in Revelation 11 and the Day of Atonement from Leviticus 16.

2)...that the TWO WITNESSES of Revelation 11 represented the Word of God as seen in the Old and New Testaments. We saw how the rejection and banishment of the Bible in France for 3 1/2 years (from Nov. 24, 1793 to April, 1797) corresponded to the 3 1/2 days the witnesses were to lie "dead" in the streets of that "great city," Paris, France.

3)...finally that the focus of mankind was redirected toward the heavenly temple. We saw the heavenly temple opened in Revelation 11:19 at the judgment in 1844. As that occurred, the Ark of the Covenant was brought into view. Thus, God was directing our attention once again to the Ten Commandment law that it contains.

In this study, Revelation 12 will be our primary focus. As we read and study this chapter, we will learn about God's remnant people.

BACKGROUND:

The Remnant in Bible History

1. There has always been a remnant.

The Bible teaches that there has always been a remnant of commandment-keeping people who love Jesus. The Bible also teaches that this remnant has been visible and identifiable.

Abraham is called the "father of the faithful" in the Bible. (The story of Abram, as he was first called, and Abraham, as God changed his name to, is contained in Genesis 11:27 - 25:11). Though the majority of the world had turned their back on Him, God still had a faithful remnant. You remember when Abraham was called out of Ur in the land of Babylon to follow God more closely? Notice the key characteristic of God's true "movement" then. In Genesis 26:5, God has recorded why he blessed Abraham and his seed. It is for a very important reason.

Genesis 26:5

"Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."

God's remnant, beginning in the days of Abraham, was a faithful body of believers that kept the commandments of God.

2. The remnant has been the minority.

Now someone says, "Wait a second. Isn't there safety in numbers?" Did you know that the Bible teaches that God's people often have been in the minority? In fact, most of the time the remnant has not been known by its great numbers at all. Rather it has been identifiable because of its faithfulness to God.

In Deuteronomy 7: 6-7, we see that God did not choose Israel (literal Israel) because of their numbers.

Deut. 7:6, 7 *"For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of all people."*

Likewise, He has not chosen spiritual "Israel" based upon numbers. Therefore, in order to find God's remnant, we shouldn't drive down the street to find the largest church building. God's people have always been in the minority.

3. The remnant, were those willing to keep God's commandments.

When Israel drifted away from God, they were taken into captivity by Babylon. (We learned about this period in our studies of the Book of Daniel.) We saw that God had a small remnant, like Daniel, that remained true to God and His commandments. The Bible says God called out of the captivity a small group who would be willing by faith to keep God's commandments. In **Haggai 1:12, they are referred to as the remnant.**

Haggai 1:12 *"...all the remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God..."*

4. The New Testament church is called out.

In the New Testament, when the Jewish leaders rebelled against Jesus, there was another calling out. It is from that remnant the Christian church was established. Paul describes them in **Romans 11:5.**

Rom. 11:5 *"Even so then at this present time also **there is a remnant** according to the election of grace."*

Paul tells us there was a remnant who remained loyal to God in the years following the crucifixion of Christ. He explains that because of God's election and grace, they remained as part of His true people.

Let's summarize:

In the days of Abraham, God called out a "people" from the land of Ur that obeyed His commandments. These people in time drifted away and were taken into captivity in Babylon. In the days of Ezra and Nehemiah (at the end of the 70 year's captivity), there was another calling out. A remnant of commandment-keeping people left Babylon to rebuild the ruins and reestablish true religion in Jerusalem. A few hundred years later (when Jesus came to earth) the Old Testament church had once more apostatized or become corrupted. Again, we learned, there was another calling out of a faithful remnant. This remnant became the early Christian church.

Revelation Defines the Remnant of the End

In the New Testament we learn there was a remnant after the First Advent of Christ. The Bible also tells us that there will be a remnant ready to meet God before the Second Advent.

In Revelation 12:17, John describes the two key identifying characteristics of this end-time remnant.

Revelation 12:17

"And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

This verse is placed right before the chapter on the mark of the beast. It is intended to draw attention to the people who will be persecuted by the Roman papacy and its allies at the end of time. It is also an echo of Revelation 14:12 which describes those who gain the victory over the beast and his image.

Revelation 14:12

"Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

Before we focus on the two key characteristics of the remnant, let's take a brief look at the context to understand the historical setting for this end time remnant.

Revelation 12:1-6

"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a male child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up into God, and to his throne. And this woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days."

Revelation 12:1

"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:"

As we have learned in our earlier studies, a "women" in symbolic Bible prophecy represents a church. Here, we have a beautiful, pure woman, clothed with the brightness of the sun which represents the righteousness of Christ. She wears a crown of twelve stars which represents the truth of the gospel, as founded on Christ by the twelve apostles. Her feet rest upon the moon. We know the moon reflects the light of the sun. Thus, the moon symbolically represents the reflection of Christ's righteousness. This word picture gives us a **symbol of the purity of the Church that is true to Jesus Christ---the church that is His bride whom He loves.**

Let's compare the description of this woman, this pure church, to another one shown in Revelation 17:3, 4.

Revelation 17: 3-4

"So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:"

Here we are introduced to the “scarlet harlot” representing an impure, apostate church. (Note that often in the Bible, when God’s people leave the purity of their first love for Jesus Christ and His truth, they are spoken of as committing adultery with the world.)

Ezekiel 23:30

“I will do these things unto thee, because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen, and because thou art polluted with their idols.”

Revelation 12:2-5

“And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a male child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up into God, and to his throne.”

In these verses, we see a reference to a Man-child born of the purity of those that followed God. We see this Child is to rule the nations. He is “caught up unto God, and to His throne”. The Man-child referred to here is none other than Christ Jesus. We also see a great red dragon, which verse 9 identifies as Satan.

Revelation 12:9

“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, ...”

Revelation 12:5

“And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.”

The Male Child was caught up to heaven and to God's throne where the dragon could not harm Him. This is, without a doubt, a reference to the ascension of Christ and His enthronement at the time of Pentecost.

Ephesians 1:20, 21

“Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:”

Revelation 12:6

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

Verse 6 draws our attention to the 1260 years when God’s faithful church was oppressed by the papal persecution of the Middle Ages.

Revelation 12:7-12

“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come

salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, [ye] heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.”

Here we encounter an amazing text! In this passage, the Bible describes a war that took place in heaven. We see Satan and his angels being defeated and cast out of heaven. (From Revelation 12:4, we see that Satan’s rebellion drew out 1/3 of the angels with him). Who is it that we see fighting, and prevailing, against Satan? Michael, whom we have learned, from our study of Daniel chapter 10, is Jesus Christ.

Revelation 12:10

“And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.”

When did Christ ultimately prevail over Satan? Answer: At the cross.

John 12:31, 32

“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”

He came to earth, lived a perfect life, died for the sins of the world, was resurrected, and then was “caught up to heaven ... to God (the Father) and to His throne.”

Revelation 12:11

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”

Verse 11 gives us some characteristics of those that overcame (overcome) Satan (as the accuser of the brethren). They overcome Satan “*by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony*”.

Revelation 12:12

“Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.”

In verse 12, the Bible reveals that Satan is even more angry with God's people since the cross because he knows that he is defeated. Now that he can no longer harass heaven, where do you think he will focus his efforts? This verse gives the answer.

Revelation 12:13-14

*“And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, **he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child**. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.”*

In verse 13, the Bible reveals who Satan was angry with immediately following the cross. Satan directed his wrath and focus toward the “woman” representing the pure church of Christ. This verse again ties us

back to the 1260 years of persecution when the church was attacked by Satan through the papal power. It also shows us that the time period prophetically pictured in Rev. 12:7-14 is not “*after*” that of Rev. 12:1-6. Rather, Rev. 12:6 and Rev. 12:14 draw our attention to the same time reference.

During the first 300 years of the Christian era, the Christian church remained relatively pure. During this time there were intense periods of persecution like that under Nero, Domitian, and Diocletian. Thousands died for their faith; eleven of the twelve original apostles died a martyr's death. Many Christians were gouged to death, torched in the coliseum at Rome, thrown to the lions, or beheaded. Instead of destroying Christianity, persecution fanned the fires of the faith. The blood of the martyrs became the seed of the church. Satan was unable to destroy outright the early Christian church. So, with the development of the Roman papacy's church/state in 538 A.D, Satan tried to destroy it by adulterating the original truths of God's Word by getting the pure church to “go a whoring after false teachings”. What the Roman church could not accomplish by persuasion, it accomplished by the sword.

In verse 6, the Bible tells us the “*woman fled into the wilderness.*” It also says that God would feed her there for 1260 days. In prophecy a day is equal to a year. (Remember our study in Daniel 7.) Ezekiel 4:6 and Numbers 14:34 are two key scriptures that bear this out.

Ezekiel 4:6 “... *I have appointed thee each day for a year.*”

Numbers 14:34 “*After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, [even] forty days, **each day for a year**, shall ye bear your iniquities, [even] forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.*”

We learned in our previous studies that the 1260 years of papal supremacy began in the year 538 A.D. when the Roman church became a church/state entity. That time period ended in 1798 when Berthier took the pope captive. In verses 15 and 16, we discover what Satan tried to do in order to destroy the church during the 1260 years.

Revelation 12:15-16

“*And the serpent cast out of his mouth **water as a flood** after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the **earth** opened her mouth, and **swallowed up the flood** which the dragon cast out of his mouth.*”

Two key symbols are here used.

The first is water. The Bible says that a flood came out of the mouth of the dragon to sweep the church away.

The second is earth. The Bible says that the earth swallowed up the flood of water.

Revelation 17:15

“*And he saith unto me, the **waters** which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, **are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.***”

Here we find that waters in prophecy represent multitudes of people. The opposite of water is earth. If water represents many peoples, then the earth represents a place with very few people. Thus, Satan tried to destroy God's church by a flood of persecution, hoping to sweep it away. But, the Bible says, the church would find refuge in an uninhabited wilderness. History is clear. The wilderness which came to the aid of the woman was America. It was America that swallowed up the flood, by opening her shores for people immigrating from the Old World. Shortly before the end of the 1260 years, Protestants fled

Europe to come to the wilderness of America to worship God in freedom. They believed they could worship God in America without being killed or put in prison. The 1260 years of verses 6 and 14 ended in 1798. What nation was coming into existence around 1798? It was the United States of America! The Bible teaches that the United States of America would be the safe haven for the church as it fled from Rome. Now Satan is persistence. In Revelation 12:17 and 13:1, the Bible tells us that Satan pursued the church to the New World.

Revelation 12:17

*"And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and **went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.**"*

Revelation 13:1

"And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy."

In verse 13:1, the King James Version of the Bible does not accurately reflect the original Greek in the oldest and most trustworthy manuscripts. The Revised Standard Version corrects the mistake and reads identical to the Greek.

Revelation 13:1 (RSV)

"And he [the dragon who is Satan] stood on the sand of the sea"

The Apostle John tells us that the true church would not be the popular church during the Dark Ages. Rather, it would be the church that went underground. During this time, there was always a people who remained faithful to the gospel and were obedient to God's Word. The Church would flee to the New World to escape persecution. The Bible also says the dragon subsequently followed the "woman" to America. In Revelation 13, the Bible focuses on the end time issue of the mark of the beast and the death penalty for refusing false worship. **The Bible teaches that the remnant would be the special object of Satan's anger and wrath in the final crisis.**

Nine Characteristics of the Remnant:

1. They Keep the Commandments of God.

The Bible says in Revelation 12:17: *"And the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war with the **remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.**"*

When I read the Ten Commandments, I read ten and not nine. For this statement to be true, God's people must keep all Ten Commandments, including the Seventh-day Sabbath which is Saturday. Therefore, the remnant must be a Sabbath-keeping Christian group.

2. They have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Verse 17 also says that remnant has the testimony of Jesus. In **Revelation 19:10**, John defines the "testimony of Jesus" as the "Spirit of Prophecy."

Revelation 19:10

*"And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: **for the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy.**"*

What does the Bible say the testimony of Jesus Christ is? Answer: The Spirit of Prophecy.

Amos 3:17 tells us: *“Surely the Lord God does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.”*

The Bible says that the gift of prophecy would be manifest among God’s people right before the end.

Joel 2:28

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Also also upon the servants and the handmaids in those days I will pour out my spirit.”

The Bible is very clear that the remnant would be a prophetic movement. The manifestation of the prophetic gift would be seen among the remnant church just before Jesus returns. Through this gift, it would bear witness to Jesus. We will deal with this point in greater detail in a future study.

3. They are a religious minority in Christendom.

Verse 17 refers to God’s faithful as the *“remnant.”* A remnant is not a majority. It is a minority. It literally means *“the remaining ones.”*

4. They arise after the 1260 years of papal persecution.

In **Revelation 12:6, 14** the Bible teaches that the church would go underground for 1260 years. After the persecutions of the Middle Ages, the remnant is pictured coming into existence just before the mark of the beast issue at the end of time.

As we have previously learned, the book of Daniel was unsealed in 1798. In our study of Revelation 10, we learned that, after the disappointment of 1844, God’s people would emerge as a world wide movement.

5. They find their beginnings in the New World.

The Bible says, *“The dragon stood on the sand of the sea.”* Thus he followed the church after 1798 to America. The Remnant of Revelation 12:17 is pictured arising in the New World before the lamb-like beast, which represents the United States, joins forces with the Roman church resulting in the mark of the beast issue.

6. They are a gospel-centered remnant.

Revelation 14:12 adds a little to the phrase of Revelation 12:17.

Revelation 14:2

*“Here is the patience of the saints: Here are they **that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.**”*

The Bible tells us that **the remnant keep God’s commandments.** But it also says they have the *“faith of Jesus.”* Friends, the Bible teaches that the remnant will lift up the Savior. It will be a movement that points to the cross of Christ as the only cure for the sin-sick soul.

7. The remnant teaches the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12.

The context of Revelation 12 -14 indicates that the Remnant teaches the three angels' messages. **These messages are the last warning to our world.**

1st Angel:

The first angel proclaims the hour of God's judgment is come. Here the Bible teaches that the Remnant would proclaim the message of the judgment after the year 1844. The first angel's message also calls the last generation to return to the worship of the Creator.

Revelation 14:6, 7

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.”

The seventh-day Sabbath is the sign of such worship---worship of the Creator God.

Exodus 13:9 *“And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the LORD'S law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt.”*

Exodus 31:13, 14 *“Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it [is] a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that [ye] may know that I [am] the LORD that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it [is] holy unto you...”*

2nd Angel:

The second angel announces the fall of Babylon. The true church would announce the fall of an end-time religious system which has compromised the truth. It would call God's people to come out of this system.

Revelation 14:8 *“And there followed another angel, saying, **Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.**”*

Revelation 18:4 *“ And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, **Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.**”*

3rd Angel:

The third angel's message warns of the mark of the beast. The remnant would warn the world of giving in to forced worship and receiving the mark of the beast.

Revelation 14:9-12 *“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, **If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive [his] mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here [are] they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.**”*

8. The remnant is a world-wide movement.

In Revelation 14:6 the Bible says the remnant message must go with a "**loud voice**" to "**every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.**" **The Remnant is a global movement.**

9. Has roots to the Great Disappointment of 1844

As we look at Daniel 12 and Revelation 10 we learned that after the Great Disappointment of 1844 they would "*Prophesy Again.*"

Revelation 10:11 "*And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.*" Therefore, God's remnant church would rise from the ashes of the Great Disappointment of 1844.

Can we know who the remnant is? Is there a "true remnant church" today?

The Seventh-day Adventist Church meets the description of these 9 characteristics.

1. It keeps all ten of the commandments, including the 4th commandment. It honors God by keeping the biblical seventh-day Sabbath holy.
2. The church can trace its origin and identity to the prophetic timeline of prophecy in Daniel and Revelation. It has the "*Testimony of Jesus*" which the Bible says is, "*The spirit of prophecy.*"
3. While the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the fastest growing Christian church in the world today, it still is a minority, or remnant in terms of sheer numbers. In the keeping of the biblical seventh-day Sabbath, this church stands almost alone in the Christian world.
4. As prophesied, God's true remnant church would arise as a world-wide movement after the unsealing of the Book of Daniel which occurred in 1798. Only one church emerged after 1798 in North America from the ashes of the Great Disappointment of 1844 to become a global movement. This church is the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
5. The Seventh-day Adventist church came into existence in New England after 1844. It was made up of Baptists, Methodists, Reformed, Catholics, and people of various faiths who turned their backs on man's traditions and accepted the truth of the Scriptures and of the Second Advent.
6. It is a gospel-centered church. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has always taught and always will teach that we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ alone. Keeping His commandments is our love response to Jesus. It is the evidence that we have already exercised saving faith.
7. It is the only church that openly teaches the three angels' messages as God's last call to a dying world.
8. The Seventh-day Adventist movement is truly a world-wide movement. It is the fastest growing Christian church on Planet Earth. It has the largest missionary program in Protestantism, and has missionary centers, colleges, and universities on every continent to evangelize the globe. It is the only church we know of that has developed a global strategy to take the three angels' messages to every inhabitant on earth. Even though it is only a remnant; it is a very, very loud evangelistic movement.
9. It is the only church to rise from the Great Disappointment of 1844 to encircle to globe with the three angels' message.

While God has people in every denomination, there is only one group of people on earth today that meets or even professes to meet every one of these identifying marks of the prophetically-identified remnant. That church is the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

It is by no accident that you have come to this series of prophecy meetings. Of the many thousands of people in this state, the Spirit of God has led you here because He wanted to reveal to you something wonderful. The Holy Spirit has desired to reveal to you the glorious fact that God has a movement in the last days of earth's history. So God is calling you today, not simply to put the information you have learned in your brain, but to say, "Dear Lord, I choose to respond. I choose to step out. I choose to become a part of your end-time movement around the world."