

THE HEAVENLY CALLING

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Heb. 3:1

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The Time of the End

Part XX

A Woman, a Dragon, a Man-Child

And there appeared a great wonder [‘sign’] 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 [‘sign’] 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 part 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 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.

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 (Rev. 12:1-6).

Revelation chapters eleven and twelve must be studied together. The former chapter *introduces* the latter chapter, and the latter chapter provides *additional details and commentary* for the former chapter.

Chapter eleven began by calling attention to the whole of the seven-year Tribulation, divided into two equal parts, two equal periods of three and one-half years. Events during the lat-

ter half of the Tribulation were briefly mentioned first — the Gentiles treading the city of Jerusalem under foot (v. 2). Then, a single series of events was singled out to cover the first three and one-half years — the ministry of two individuals sent from heaven to earth to bear witness to the Jewish people immediately before they entered into their darkest hour (v. 3). And part of the chapter was then given over to providing details concerning the ministry of these two witnesses (vv. 4-12).

Then chapter twelve picks up where chapter eleven left off and provides details and commentary concerning events surrounding Israel and the nations immediately before and during the time referenced in verse two of the preceding chapter — during that time when Jerusalem would be trodden under foot by the Gentiles for three and one-half years, during the last half of the Tribulation.

As well, chapter twelve itself is also integrally arranged in a similar manner. The first six verses provide the complete story, with the remainder of the chapter forming commentary. The first three verses (vv. 1-3), forming a continuation from the previous chapter, lead into and form the background for the three verses which follow (vv. 4-6). Then the commentary seen in the remainder of the chapter has to do with these latter three verses.

Verses seven through twelve provide commentary for verse four; verse thirteen provides commentary for verses four and five; verses fourteen through sixteen provide commentary for verse six; and verse seventeen somewhat covers the whole of the matter and provides commentary for all three of

these verses.

Then subsequent chapters, particularly chapters thirteen, fourteen, and seventeen through the first part of nineteen, continue this commentary. All of these chapters (chs. eleven through fourteen, and seventeen through the first part of nineteen) are inseparably tied together in this respect and must be studied as a unit, with any one part being incomplete when separated from the other parts.

Identity of the Woman, Dragon, and Man-Child

Metaphors are used extensively throughout chapter twelve, which is something seen throughout the Book of Revelation and throughout Scripture in general. That is to say, the “woman” is not a literal woman but is descriptive of someone or something else; and so it is with the “dragon” and the “man child.” All three have to do with things which are literal, which, in themselves, are descriptive of that which they are referencing. And that being depicted by all three metaphors is clearly made known in the chapter itself, through comparing Scripture with Scripture.

Metaphors are used in Scripture *in a completely consistent manner*, and man is never left to his own imagination as to that which God is depicting through the use of metaphors. The texts, contexts, and / or related Scripture elsewhere will *always* shed light on the matter, revealing how the metaphors are being used.

1) The Woman

The “woman” can easily be identified as *Israel* through a number of means.

The “woman” — in association with *the sun, the moon, and the stars* — is presented within the scope of Joseph’s

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second dream in Gen. 37:9. The typology and the symbolism in this verse in Genesis have to do with *Christ and Israel* (cf. v. 10) — *Christ ruling over Israel during the Messianic Era, with regality also shown relative to Israel.*

In Rev. 12:1, the woman and the symbolism have to do with *Israel and the nations* (cf. Rev. 6:12-17; 12:3) — *Israel ruling over the nations during the Messianic Era, with regality also shown relative to the nations.*

Israel in Rev. 12:1, unlike in Gen. 37:9, is seen *clothed with the sun* (symbolizing the main governing power), *the moon under her feet* (symbolizing Gentile powers subject to Israel [cf. Ps. 110:1, 2; Rev. 6:12-17]), and a *crown of twelve stars* upon her head (further showing regality through the use of “a crown” and “twelve stars” [the number of *governmental perfection*, with the *stars* also showing governing powers, regality]).

(There are two words for “crown” in the Greek text of the New Testament — *stephanos* and *diadema*. The former word [stephanos] would be used of an individual not actually seated on the throne and holding the sceptre, not reigning at the present time, though in a position to reign; the latter word [diadema] would be used of one actually seated on the throne and holding the sceptre, one presently reigning.

The word used for crown in the text of Rev. 12:1 is *stephanos*, indicating a present nonreigning position for the woman, for Israel, but also indicating that this woman is in a position to hold the sceptre and reign at a future time [cf. Rev. 17:18]. And at that future time the “crown of twelve stars” would no longer be described through the use of the word *stephanos* but, rather, through the use of the word *diadema*.)

The woman is further seen *with child*, “travailing in birth,” *in pain, awaiting deliverance* (v. 2). This, of course, has to do with the woman in labor, about to give birth, about to bring forth the man-child (v. 4).

Then the woman, following the birth of the man-child (v. 5), is seen fleeing into the wilderness where she has “a place prepared of God”; and she would be divinely cared for and protected in this place during the last three and one-half

years of the tribulation (vv. 6, 14). This has its parallel in Matt. 24:16-22; Mark 13:15-19; Luke 21:21-24, which, as well, has to do with Israel during the last half of the Tribulation.

Thus, in complete keeping with what this part of the Book of Revelation is about — *Israel and the nations, as Satan continues his rule through the nations* — the identity of the woman is seen at every turn.

2) The Dragon

The identity of the “dragon” in verses three and four is seen in the subsequent commentary part of the text itself. The “dragon” is identified as *the Devil, Satan* (v. 9). He is the one seen back in verse three, ruling through the nations in the kingdom of the Beast when this man rises to power as world ruler near the middle of the Tribulation.

In Revelation chapter six the Beast was seen riding forth on a white horse, “conquering, and to conqueror.” In this opening part of the Tribulation, he was seen wearing a “crown,” described through the use of the word *stephanos*. This man’s aspirations at the time were *worldwide dominion*. But achieving his goal and wearing a crown described by the word *diadema* awaited a future date. It awaited *conquest after conquest*.

Then, in chapter twelve, this man is brought to the forefront again and is now seen wearing *the diadem which he had sought*. Note in verse three that all seven heads of the Beast are crowned (cf. Rev. 17:9-12), and the word used for “crown” in the Greek text is *diadema*, not *stephanos* as used relative to Israel in verse one. Further, the “ten horns,” depicting this man’s ten-kingdom federation, are seen crowned with *diadems* in the opening verse of the next chapter.

Thus, the man previously seen riding forth when the first seal of the seven-sealed scroll was broken, wearing a crown depicted by the word *stephanos*, will now have achieved the power which he had sought three and one-half years earlier — *worldwide dominion*.

In Rev. 12:3, this man’s kingdom is seen so closely aligned with Satan that the dragon himself is depicted as having the seven crowned heads and ten crowned horns. This is how inseparable Satan, the one ruling through the nations during Man’s Day, is seen aligned

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with the final form of Gentile world power at the end of Man’s Day. And Satan will give to this man controlling the final form of Gentile world power “*his power, and his seat [‘throne’], and great authority*” (Rev. 13:2).

3) The Man-Child

Most commentators and Bible teachers dealing with chapter twelve identify the “man child” as *Christ*, also brought forth by Israel. This is done mainly on the basis of two things said about the man-child in verse five. The man-child is destined “to rule all nations with a rod of iron”; and, following his birth, the man-child is “caught up unto God, and to his throne.” Both would appear to identify the man-child as *Christ*. Christ, brought forth by Israel (as the man-child was brought forth by Israel), is destined to rule the nations as described in the text (Ps. 2:6-9); and Christ, as well, ascended to the same place described in the text (Ps. 110:1; Acts 1:9; 7:56).

Then again, co-heirs with Christ have a similar connection with Israel, are given the same promise relative to ruling the nations, and will be caught up into heaven as well (Gal. 3:29; I Thess. 4:16, 17; Rev. 2:26, 27). And this has led some commentators and Bible students to associate the man-child with Christians being removed in what they would see as a selective rapture of Christians (though this would be completely out of place, for all Christians will have previously been removed from the earth; and, aside from this fact, selective rapture is not taught in Scripture anyway).

But, after all is said and done, bear something in mind. The “woman” and the “dragon” are identified in the chapter. And the same should be expected con-

cerning the identity of the man-child as well, *which is exactly what can be found*. The man-child is *unquestionably identified* later in the chapter, and a proper identification will open parts of chapters seven, eleven, and fourteen to one's understanding (plus verses in the Olivet Discourse accounts, along with parts of the O.T.), which would otherwise remain closed.

With that in mind, note what the text and context have to say and teach about the matter.

First, the reference to a "man child," used as a metaphor, must be *in complete keeping* with how both the "woman" and the "dragon" are used as metaphors in the chapter. And doing this would automatically discount any teaching that the man-child is a reference to *Christ*. If *Christ* is being referenced, then the expression is not really being used as a metaphor in the same sense that the other two are being used, for *Christ* was brought forth by Israel as both a "male" and a "child," or a "son" (literal rendering from the Gk. text in v. 5 is "a son, a male," with the Greek word for "child" also used in the text and context [vv. 4, 5]).

But the preceding, contextually, is really inconsequential. Any thought that the man-child is a reference to *Christ* is nullified by the context on both sides of the text. Note *the timing* of the birth of the man-child in verse five. The man-child's birth occurs *after* Satan and his angels have been cast out of their abode in the heavens, which places this birth *just before or in the middle of the Tribulation* (v. 4); and it occurs immediately before Israel flees into the wilderness at the full end of the 1,260 days covering the first half of the Tribulation (v. 6). Also, the birth of the man-child will occur *either very near or at the time when the two witnesses in chapter eleven are slain*, which is also at the full end of the first 1,260 days of the Tribulation.

But how is the man-child identified in Revelation chapter twelve? The man-child is seen following the woman fleeing "into the wilderness" (v. 14) as "the remnant of her [the woman's] seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (v. 17 [seen also in v. 13 of the previous chapter]). And that stated about "the remnant" in 12:17 would also identify them with the 144,000 in chapters seven and fourteen.

(This birth and identity of the man-child will be further developed in the next part of this article, where different things in both chapters eleven and twelve will be tied together.)

The Great Seismos

"And the same hour was there a great earthquake [Gk., *seismos*], and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake [*seismos*] were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven" (Rev. 11:13).

The Greek word *seismos*, used twice in the preceding verse, has to do with "a shaking," "an agitation"; and that being shaken has to be understood contextually. The word *seismos* is consistently used *after only one fashion* in its four other appearances in the Book of Revelation (6:12; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18). The word is consistently used *in connection with judgment related to regal power*, particularly in connection with God's judgment upon the kingdom of the Beast (e.g., 6:12), though Israel is seen in the picture as well (e.g., 16:18, 19a). And it is evident that the word *seismos* is used after the same fashion in Rev. 11:13, referring to *a shaking of powers in both the heavens and upon the earth*, not with an earthquake (ref. Parts XIV, XVII of this series).

(Note also that in Matthew's, Mark's, and Luke's Olivet Discourse accounts, depicting events during the Tribulation, the same thing is also true [Matt. 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:10, 11]. The word *seismos* is used in each instance in connection with regality, with governmental powers, not with the earth [not with an earthquake].)

The word "hour," seen in verse thirteen, is used in Scripture in a similar sense to the way "day" is used. "Day" is used referring to both a twenty-four-hour period and a longer period of time (e.g., Matt. 16:21; 17:1; 27:40; John 8:56; 14:20; 16:23, 26), and "hour" is used referring to both a sixty-minute period and a longer period of time (e.g., Matt. 20:3, 5, 6, 9; 24:42, 44, 50). And these two words are used by numerous cultures after these same two fashions today (e.g., note the way "today" is used in

the preceding sentence).

The expression, "the same hour," seen in this verse, must be understood both textually and contextually. The reference, evidently, is not to a sixty-minute period surrounding the resurrection and ascension of the two witnesses but to a longer period of time (understood more in the sense of "during that time [the word 'same,' KJV, is not in the Gk. text]"). A number of Greek manuscripts also have the word for "day" instead of "hour" in this verse, which, if the correct rendering, would also have to be understood the same way.

This is borne out by what the verse goes on to say. During that time referenced in the verse there was *a great shaking*. Contextually, this great shaking could only have begun to occur *no later* than when the Beast overcame and killed the two witnesses, *possibly shortly before this time*. In this respect, the time in view would encompass *several days*.

Chapter twelve then deals with and describes this shaking through relating details concerning the war in heaven (vv. 4, 7-9) and details concerning the woman being driven from her capital city and land (vv. 13, 14).

Both have to do with *powers being shaken* — the incumbent ruler, with his angels, being cast out of the heavens onto the earth; and the crowned woman, who is about to take the sceptre, being driven from her city and land.

Then reference is made to three things connected with this shaking: 1) a tenth part of Jerusalem falls, 2) seven thousand are slain in the city, and 3) those comprising the remnant are terrified (an intensified form of the word for "frightened" is used in the Gk. text). Note that "tenth" and "seven thousand" are numbers showing *completeness*. The numbers undoubtedly are not used referring to a tenth part of the city falling in an earthquake, leaving seven thousand slain. Rather the statements would be similar to that seen in Zech. 8:23 where *the number ten* ("ten men") is used to show completeness, signifying those comprising "all languages of the nations" (i.e., all those throughout the Gentile nations).

As in other parts of the Book of Rev-

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elation, it is apparent that numbers are being used to show *completeness*. And, in the light of the context and related Scripture, these numbers would show *the complete destruction of the city, and the complete uprooting of the Jewish people* (cf. Dan. 9:26; Luke 21:24; Rev. 11:2).

It will be during this time—extending throughout the last half of the Tribulation—that Satan, through the Beast, will launch his final and most intense thrust against the Jewish people, seeking their utter destruction once and for all.

It is into this type scene that the woman will give birth to the man-child, which can only be the ones referenced by “the remnant” (Gk., *loipos*, “remaining ones”) in both chapters eleven and twelve (11:13; 12:17). Is it any wonder that those comprising the remnant will be *terrified* at this time? And, is it any wonder that they will have to be *removed from the earth* if they are to survive and fulfill the purpose for their being brought forth 12:17?

(The removal of the man-child from the earth [Rev. 12:5] will be dealt with in a future part in this series [cf. Rev. 14:1-4].)

1) Birth of the Man-Child

The woman *in travail* during the first part of the Tribulation and *giving birth* to the man-child in the middle of the Tribulation is dealt with in Matthew’s and Mark’s Olivet Discourse accounts, with Luke omitting the matter in his account. And seeing how the matter is dealt with in these two accounts, plus noting something surrounding Luke’s omission of the event in his Olivet Discourse account, will help to better understand the same thing being dealt with in Revelation chapter twelve.

“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and

earthquakes [‘shakings’], in divers places.

All these are the beginning of sorrows [‘travail,’ ‘birth-pangs’]...

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matt. 24:7, 8, 14).

“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes [‘shakings’] in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows [‘travail,’ ‘birth-pangs’]...

And this gospel must first be published among all nations” (Mark 13:8, 10).

The word translated “sorrows” in Matt. 24:8 and Mark 13:8 and the word translated “travailing” in Rev. 12:2 are noun and verb forms of the same word in the Greek text (*odin* and *odino* [cf. Gal. 4:19 and I Thess. 5:3 where the same two forms of the word are used and properly translated]). The picture in both Matthew and Mark has to do with *Israel in travail during the first part of the Tribulation*, during that time when the Beast is coming to power through conquest (seen as a shaking among Gentile powers).

In both Matthew’s and Mark’s accounts, mention is made, following Israel’s travail, of the gospel of the kingdom being proclaimed throughout all the Gentile nations. Luke’s account though is *different*. Neither Israel’s travail nor the gospel being proclaimed among the nations is mentioned. And the reason is evident: *Mention or omission of one necessitates a corresponding mention or omission of the other*, for the one whom Israel brings forth at the end of her travail is the one who will carry this gospel message to the Gentile nations.

This individual is referred to as “a man child” and “the remnant of her seed [the woman’s, Israel’s seed]” in Revelation chapter twelve (along with being referenced in chapter eleven), and

as the 144,000 in chapters seven and fourteen. Thus, the birth and purpose for the birth of the man-child are dealt with quite extensively in Scripture.

2) Birth of the Nation

“Travail,” “birth-pangs,” is also seen in connection with *the birth of the nation itself during the latter part of the Tribulation* (cf. Isa. 66:7, 8; Micah 4:9-5:15). Note in Isa. 66:7, 8 that the birth of the man-child is mentioned, but Israel’s travail is seen occurring *following this birth*. In this respect, *the whole of the Tribulation* will be a time of travail for Israel, with a *first fruit of the nation being brought forth in the middle of the Tribulation* (Rev. 14:4), to be followed by *the birth of the whole nation in the main harvest at the end of the Tribulation*, as seen in the referenced verses from Isaiah and Micah.

Israel’s “travail” in Matthew’s and Mark’s Olivet discourse accounts could be viewed as covering the larger scope of the matter — *the nation’s travail throughout the entire Tribulation*. Unlike the Old Testament accounts, this travail seen in the two gospel accounts *would have to be viewed first* in connection with the man-child being brought forth, for specific reference is made of his ministry during the last half of the Tribulation. Then there is the matter of Luke not recording Israel’s travail and, as well, not recording anything about the message carried by the man-child. But Israel’s travail seen in Matthew and Mark, in the light of the Old Testament, *could also be viewed in a continuing respect*, referring to the birth of the entire nation following the birth of the man-child.

And as a *first fruit of the nation* will carry the message to the Gentiles worldwide during the last half of the Tribulation, *the entire nation*, once brought forth, will carry the message to the Gentiles worldwide during the Messianic Era which follows.

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