

THE WOMAN IN REVELATION

A Regal-Clad Woman, a Harlot Woman

By Arlen L. Chirwood

“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 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 three score days” (Rev. 12:1, 6).

“And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns...

And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over [lit., ‘which possesses kingly authority over’] the kings of the earth” (Rev. 17:1-3, 16-18).

Revelation 6:1-19:21, a section comprising most of the Book of Revelation, *has to do with events surrounding Israel and the nations — events which will shortly occur on the earth, lasting slightly over seven years.*

Events during and immediately following these seven years — *having to do with events immediately preceding Christ’s return* (events during the seven years, during the Tribulation) *and with events immediately following Christ’s return* (events immediately following the Tribulation but preceding the Millennium, evidently during a 75-day period [Dan. 12:11-13]) — *will bring matters to completion during Man’s 6,000-year Day, ushering in the Lord’s 1,000-year Day.*

These events, bringing Man’s Day to a close, had previously been seen throughout Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets; and these events dealt centrally with *a woman, Israel, the wife of Jehovah, who was given regal authority over the nations within a theocracy* (Ex. 4:22, 23; 19:5, 6), with this woman seen to have later departed from her exalted position, *becoming involved in a forbidden, adulterous relationship with the nations* (Isa. 1:21; Jer. 3:1-11).

The Old Testament is replete with information pertaining to God dealing with this harlot woman, over centuries and millenniums of time, with a view to *the woman ultimately being cleansed of her harlotry and then realizing the regal position to which she had been called* (Isa. 1:25-2:4; Jer. 3:12-25).

Then, in complete conformity with the preceding, the Book of Revelation — dealing with events during and immediately beyond the last seven years of Man’s Day, *events toward which all Scripture regarding Israel and the nations moves (whether O.T. or N.T.)* — this closing book of Scripture could only be seen dealing extensively with *the same woman previously seen throughout the Old Testament.*

No other central subject could possibly be in view and remain in line with that previously set forth time and time again throughout the Old Testament.

And, in complete conformity with the preceding, this woman in Revelation — exactly as set forth in the Old Testament, for *it can only be the same woman* — could only be one possessing a

God-given regal authority over the nations, though one not presently exercising that authority, but, instead, estranged from God and involved in harlotry, with cleansing ultimately occurring.

And the former part of the preceding is *exactly* what is seen in chapter twelve (also in ch. 17), and the latter part of the preceding is *exactly* what is seen beginning in chapter seventeen and continuing through the first part of chapter nineteen.

Placing the information in these four chapters together after this fashion is, for it can only be, *in complete conformity to any and all things in the Old Testament having to do with this same subject matter.*

The Woman in Revelation 12:1-17

The woman in chapter twelve is identified several different ways.

One way is seen in the opening verse, *through ascribing to the woman regality in relation to the nations* (exactly as seen of Israel in the O.T. at the time of the nation’s inception [Ex. 4:22, 23; 19:5, 6]).

Another way is seen through *the woman giving birth to the man-child* (the 144,000 Jewish evangelists in chs. 7, 14, *who will proclaim “the gospel of the kingdom” to the nations worldwide during the last half of the Tribulation* [Matt. 24:13, 14; Rev. 12:17; 14:1-7]).

And a third way is seen through *the woman fleeing into the wilderness in the middle of the Tribulation, shortly after giving birth to the man-child* (in complete keeping with that seen happening to Israel at this time in the three synoptic gospels [Matt. 24:15ff; Mark 13:14ff; Luke 21:20ff]).

Metaphors are used extensively throughout Scripture, which is one of the ways God has structured His Word, and Revelation chapter twelve is filled with this type language.

Note the three central personages — *the woman, the dragon, and the man-child*. “The woman” is not a literal woman, but is used referring to *Israel*; “the dragon” is not a literal dragon, but is used referring to *Satan*; and “the man-child” is not a literal man, but is used referring to *the 144,000*.

“The man-child” is identified far more often than not as *Christ* by expositors, but such an identification can only be seen as erroneous by the use of metaphors throughout. Aside from that, textually, the man-child is seen brought forth during the Tribulation, just before the middle, following Satan being cast out of heaven but before the Jews in the land flee into the wilderness.)

Then note the use of heavenly bodies — *the sun, moon, and stars* — in this same metaphorical respect. The manner in which the woman appears in verse one — *clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars upon her head* — forms an allusion back to Joseph’s second dream in Gen. 37:9, 10, depicting *regality* in both Genesis and Revelation.

The sun, moon, and stars are used in this same metaphorical respect both places. In Genesis, they are used relative to Joseph ruling over his family; in Revelation, they are used relative to the woman, Israel, ruling over the nations (*possessing regal authority over the nations at this time, with a view to occupying that position yet future*).

Regality, as seen in the preceding, is a position which Israel has not only held since the inception of the nation during Moses’ day, 3,500 years ago, but will always hold. And the Book of Revelation — dealing with over three millenniums of Israeli history brought to fruition, in complete conformity with that previously seen in Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets — *takes the matter on into that coming day when Israel ascends the throne and rules the nations*.

“For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance [without a change of mind, irrevocable]” (Rom. 11:29).

God will not, He cannot, change His mind concerning the reason that He called Israel into existence — something which will be worked out and realized in the immediate future, for we are almost at the end of Man’s Day.

In line with the preceding, Bible teachers who deal with the Book of Revelation today, with few

exceptions, correctly identify “the woman” in chapter twelve as *Israel*.

However, exactly the opposite is true when it comes to the identity of the woman in Rev. 17:1-19:6. Almost without exception, not a single one of these same Bible teachers will identify “the woman” in these chapters as *Israel*. In fact, there is often an overt aversion to this type identification among these individuals, usually attempting to identify “the woman” as *the Church of Rome, or as some other type false religious system in the end time*.

But, suppose we stay in line with Rom. 3:4, which, contextually, is about Israel — “yea, let God be true, but every man a liar” — and see what Scripture has to say instead!

The Woman in Revelation 17:1-19:6

The woman reappearing in chapter seventeen is, as back in chapter twelve, identified several different ways. And, in one respect, *this identity is made even clearer when the woman reappears in this chapter*.

Scripture does something in chapter seventeen concerning the identity of the woman which is not seen in chapter twelve. In Rev. 17:18, the woman is clearly identified by *name* — “And the woman which thou sawest is...” Then, the verse goes on to connect this woman with *the same regal authority seen back in chapter twelve*. The verse in this respect states, “which reigneth over [*lit.*, ‘which possesses kingly authority over’] the kings of the earth.”

The woman is first clearly identified in a direct statement: “The woman which thou sawest is *that great city*...” (v. 18a). “That great city” is used nine times in chapters eleven through eighteen; and the first usage identifies the city as “Jerusalem” (11:8), with “Jerusalem,” seen inseparably related to its people in Scripture and often used as a synonym for *the Jewish people, for Israel* (*cf.* Isa. 1:21; Lam. 1:7-9; Matt. 23:37-39; Luke 13:33-35).

In short, in the light of related Scripture, Rev. 17:18 should be understood as, “The woman which thou sawest is *Israel*.” And the remainder of the verse — “the one possessing kingly authority over

the kings of the earth” — further substantiates this identity, for this statement, completely in line with Rev. 12:1, *could not possibly be used of anyone on the earth at this time other than Israel*.

Then note another connection from chapter twelve, seen earlier in that stated about the woman in chapter seventeen. In chapter twelve, the woman flees into “the wilderness” in the middle of the Tribulation (vv. 6, 14).

But, where is “the wilderness” — from a Greek word (*eremos*) used in Scripture of places both in and out of the land of Israel (*e.g.*, John 1:23; 3:14)?

In chapter seventeen, the woman is seen in “the wilderness,” the *eremos* (v. 3), which is identified with Gentile nations in the kingdom of the Beast (vv. 1, 15).

And this is completely in line with the place where the woman flees in Matt. 24:16 (*cf.* Luke 21:21) — “into the mountains” — with “mountains” used in Scripture as a metaphor for “kingdoms” (*i.e.*, Gentile nations in this case [Isa. 2:1-5]).

Or this is completely in line with the type in Jonah — Jonah, in the fish, out in the sea, with “the sea” used as a metaphor for *the nations* (Dan. 7:2, 3).

And it is clear that the time element beginning chapter seventeen is during the last half of the Tribulation. Thus, chapter seventeen simply continues where chapter twelve left off.

And chapters seventeen through the first part of nineteen take one to the end of the matter — *the harlot ultimately burned with fire, bringing about a final and complete end to Israel’s harlotry (17:16, 17; 18:1-19:3), allowing the nation to realize her calling (12:1; 17:18), resulting in rejoicing in heaven (19:4-6)*.

(For more information on the preceding, refer to the author’s pamphlets, “A Place in the Wilderness,” “That Great City” [Parts. I-III], and “That Mighty City, Burning” [Parts. I, II].)

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