

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Revelation, Lecture 17, Revelation 11-12, The Seventh Trumpet, The Woman, Dragon, and the Son

© 2024 Dave Mathewson and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his course on the book of Revelation. This is session 17 on Revelation 11-12, The Seventh Trumpet, The Woman, The Dragon, and The Son.

At the very end of chapter 11, beginning in verse 14, we are introduced to the seventh trumpet or the third woe.

Remember back at the end of chapter 8, we were introduced to an eagle that uttered the threefold woe, woe, woe, and connected those with the last three trumpets. Now, verse 14 recalls that the second woe has passed, which was back in chapter 9, and the third woe is coming soon. Now, I take it as accomplished in trumpet number 7, which begins in verse 15. So 15 through the end of chapter 11, the seventh trumpet or the seventh angel sounded his trumpet, which would be the third woe, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said, the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.

And the 24 elders who were seated on their thrones before God fell on their faces, and they worshiped God, saying, we give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the one who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry, and your wrath had come. The time has come for judging the dead and for rewarding your servant, the prophets and your saints, and those who reverence your name, both small and great, and for destroying those who destroy the earth.

Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant, and there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and a great hailstorm. Those last verses, again, are imagery of final judgments. And so, with the seventh trumpet, we are clearly at the very end.

The seventh trumpet has brought us to the climax of history. Note that verse 15 begins with, and to back up, what we actually find here is that we don't have a vision. Interestingly, we don't see anything happen, but instead, we hear in the form of voices from an angelic being or loud voices in heaven, and then the 24 elders, we hear in their hymns or speech the content of the seventh trumpet.

But the seventh trumpet clearly brings us to the very end of history. And it begins with what I think is a very crucial theme in the book of Revelation, verse 15, that the

kingdom of this world has now become the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is, the kingdom and rule has been transferred from Satan and the beast and this world and the Roman Empire now to the person of Jesus Christ.

Christ's rule has now been consummated. What was true in heaven in chapters 4 and 5 is now a reality on earth. The Lord's prayer, thy kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven, has now reached its culmination.

And unlike Rome's kingdom, this kingdom now will reign forever and ever. So the transfer of rulership, the transfer of the kingdom, which is one of the dominant themes in Revelation, how will God's kingdom and sovereignty in chapters 4 and 5 finally get realized on earth, now finds its consummation as the transfer of the kingdom from this earth, the rulership of Satan and the beast, now is in the hands of God and Jesus Christ. One other point to mention is the 24 elders in verses 16 and following provide a further interpretation of these events and further content of the seal.

And I want to draw attention to simply two things. Number one, with these final verses in the speech of the 24 elders, number one, notice how God is referred to in language that we're familiar with from chapter 5. God is portrayed as the Almighty, the Sovereign One, whose power now extends throughout the entire world. His glory now has spread throughout the entire creation.

But note that he's described also as the One who is and who was. It seems to me we're missing something. And when you go back to chapter 1 and verse 8, chapter 1.4 and 1.8, and also in chapter 4 verse 8, we find this a version of the threefold, the One who is and was and is to come.

We're missing what is to come. And that is intentional, I think because there's no need for it. The kingdom has already arrived.

What is to come is now already a reality, with God's eternal kingdom arriving at a place where God, his Messiah, and his people will rule forever and ever. So there's no more need for the third part of that phrase, the One who is to come because now his kingdom has already arrived and been consummated. The rest of verse 15 also, and verse 17 and 18 the rest of 17 and 18, in a sense, introduce us to what I think are the primary thematic strands that will be taken up in the rest of the book, where the author says, especially in 18, the nations were angry, and your wrath has come, which we saw happening, we see happening in the judgment scenes.

The time has come for judging the dead and for rewarding your servants, the prophets, and your saints, and all those who reverence your name, both great and small, and for destroying those who destroy the earth. This prepares for the scenes of judgment and the scenes of reward and vindication that we will see in chapters 19

through 22. So, in a sense, this last part of the seal introduces, in the form of the speech or songs of the 24 elders, the main strands that will be developed in more detail in chapters 19 through 22 later on in the book.

Now, that brings us to the end of the seventh seal, and in a sense, then, we have reached the end of history. Starting with chapter 10, you sense that we've reached a climax. In this language, time is no more, another set of plagues, the seven thunders are sealed up, time is going to be no more, and now we find the final climax, the seventh trumpet, the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of God and his son Jesus Christ, it's time now to reward the saints, it's time now to judge the dead, and you have a sense that this is a crucial climax in the book.

In that way, the book could almost end right here. We've been brought to the climax, the goal of chapter 4 and 5 has been reached, the goal of history has now been reached, time is no more, the one who is to come has now arrived, his kingdom has been established. Yet, we're only about halfway through the book.

Chapters 12 and 13, in a sense, seem to almost begin a new vision. Intriguingly, David Aune's commentary and a number of other works actually begin a new section with verse 19 of chapter 11, where God's temple in heaven was opened. In the same way, in chapter 4, we saw heaven open; now, once again, we see heaven open.

So some have actually begun seeing a new section beginning in chapter 12 and verse 13. Maybe the way to look at it is like this, is that Revelation tells the same story twice. And this isn't the only way to look at it, but one way.

It tells the same story twice. One of those stories is told in chapter 4 through 11, and now chapters 12 through 22 will tell the same story as chapters 4 through 11, but now using different imagery, and now in a more detailed and a deeper way than chapters 1 through 11 did. Nevertheless, chapters 12 and 13 have often been described as the center point of Revelation or the fulcrum of the book.

Whether that is the case or not, chapters 12 through 13 clearly play a very significant and very important role. In fact, we've already suggested that chapters 12 and 13 will spell out in more detail the conflict that we saw in chapter 11, where the two witnesses accomplished their witness, but a beast came out of the abyss and put them to death. We will now be introduced to the beast again, and we will now be introduced to that conflict, but it's as if that conflict in chapter 11 is now going to be explored in a more detailed and much deeper manner than it was explored in chapter 11.

Chapter 12 introduces us to a section that I think has the primary function of exploring the true source of the church's conflict. So, starting with chapters 2 and 3, and especially the two churches that were suffering because they refused to

compromise, and chapters 11 and elsewhere, the portrayal of the church as suffering and its faithful witness, chapters 12 and 13 is now going to explore in more detail the true source of the church's conflict, the true source of the conflict they now face. In other words, in true apocalyptic fashion, chapters 12 and 13 are going to lift the curtain and lift the veil and show God's people in an expanded view, in a new perspective to show them when they look out at the world, and they suffer at the hands of Rome, and they're called upon to refuse to compromise and suffer because of that.

And one person, Antipas, has already lost his life, and John thinks more is to come. How are they to see that? Chapters 12 and 13 lift the curtain to help the readers see more clearly, from a new perspective, the true source of this conflict and what they struggle with so that therefore they can see it and respond to it in a new light. In chapter 12, we are introduced to three major characters that kind of dominate the scene in chapter 12.

We're going to be introduced to a woman, who is described in rather interesting details, we're going to be introduced to a dragon, and then we are going to be introduced to a son, the son of the woman. But look at chapter 12. Revelation chapter 12 reads, And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.

And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1260 days. And there was a war in heaven.

Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down, the ancient serpent, called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.

He was hurled down to the earth and his angels with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say, Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of God and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you who dwell in them.

But woe to the earth and to the sea because the devil has gone down to you. He is filled with fury because he knows that his time is short. When the dragon saw that he had been hurled down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child.

The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle so that she might fly to a place prepared for her in the desert. When she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach, then from his mouth, the serpent spewed water like a river to overtake the woman and keep her away with the torrent.

But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river so that the dragon had spewed out of its mouth. Then the dragon was enraged at the woman, and he went off to make war against the rest of her offspring, those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony. Very interesting story indeed.

But what I want to do is try to untangle a little bit of this story, of this interaction between a woman and a dragon and the son of the woman as well. And to ask the question again of some of the details as far as their background. But how does this function within the book of Revelation? How does it function for first-century readers in helping them to come to grips with and understand the situation in which they find themselves? First of all, is asking the question of identity.

The first one is who is this woman that we are introduced to at the beginning of chapter 12. The woman is described in very interesting terms. She's clothed with the sun. She has the moon under her feet.

She has 12 stars on her head. Without reading all of the text, starting with Genesis, but also in some of the intertestamental apocalyptic literature, this language of sun and moon and having stars on one's head is often associated with a description of the patriarchs and their wives. For example, in Genesis chapter 37, which I think is verse 9, we read Genesis chapter 37 and verse 9. Then, he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers.

Listen, he said, I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and 11 stars were bowing down to me, describing Joseph's dream. So notice the sun and moon and the stars in association with the 12 sons of Israel, with the patriarchs, and we also find in, for example, in a book like the Testament of Abraham, another apocalyptic work, and elsewhere that the sun and moon and the 12 stars around the head are often associated with the patriarchs and even their wives. So that suggests that probably, at least at this point, the woman stands for the nation of Israel, out of which the Messiah came, which obviously, as we'll see in a moment, the son that she gives birth to is to be identified with.

So, at this point, the woman probably stands for the nation of Israel, but she gives birth to the Messiah, the son of God, Messiah, and interestingly, the woman still plays a role after the birth of the son. So the woman probably stands for more than only the nation of Israel but demonstrates the continuity of the people of God, that she's Israel, but then she's also the new people of God, people of God consisting of

both Jew and Gentile or the church in the later part of Revelation. So, the woman probably transcends any one specific time period.

She's Israel, but clearly, she represents and embodies the entire people of God, and we've seen John do that already, taking Old Testament language, such as a kingdom of priests, that applied to Israel and now applies to the church, the new people of God, that expands Israel and includes people from every tribe and language and nation. And I think that's how we should look at the woman here. The fact that this woman suffers, well, let me back up; the woman also could at least partially, though I would not say primarily and exclusively, may at least be suggestive of Mary, the mother of Jesus, since she does give birth to the son.

But probably, therefore, the woman is more than just the nation of Israel, but may suggest Mary as part of that and extends to include the church as the people of God as well. The fact that she suffers birth pangs again was a typical Old Testament notion, an apocalyptic notion of birth pangs indicating suffering, the suffering of God's people, which now leads up to the Messiah, to the birth of the Messiah. So that's the first character, a woman who represents Israel, but more broadly represents the people of God, that transcends Old Testament Israel, but also includes the New Testament people of God, the church, made up of Jew and Gentile.

The second sign that we are introduced to is a dragon, a dragon that is described as having seven heads and ten horns, with seven suggesting completion, perfection, and ten being a large number suggesting completion, so you get this picture of something that wields great power and authority. The dragon, once more the dragon as we saw with the beast back in chapter 11, is a figure or image that comes down to John already with a history. It brings with it a history; it already brings with it a meaning that has picked up through its use throughout Old Testament literature and throughout Old Testament history.

Within the Old Testament, we find a dragon or a sea monster type of figure playing an important role in the Old Testament, in many of the Psalms, and in the prophetic literature to symbolize a kingdom or a ruler. For example, we often find a pharaoh in Egypt portrayed as a sea monster or a dragon. In other Jewish works, we often find a dragon or sea monster used to portray wicked, godless, oppressive empires that oppose God and persecute his people.

For example, in Psalm chapter 74, and I'm just providing a couple of examples, one from the Psalms and one from prophetic literature, Psalm 74 in verses 13 and 14, I'll back up and read 12. But you, O God, are king from old. You bring salvation upon the earth.

It was you who split open the sea with your power. You broke the heads of the monster in the water. It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan.

Another sea monster that has associations with the Old Testament. Some would even say going all the way back to Genesis. You read of the Leviathan in apocalyptic literature and other similar beasts such as in 1 Enoch.

You crushed the heads of the Leviathan, and you gave him his food to the creatures in the desert. Clearly, in the context of splitting open the sea, the sea monster or Leviathan, notice the heads of the Leviathan, a seven-headed monster, clearly represents here Pharaoh, the ruler over Egypt at the time when God split the sea and led the Israelites through. Another interesting text, Isaiah chapter 51 and verse 9 gives an example from an Old Testament prophetic text.

But in Isaiah chapter 51 and verse 9, we read, and this is in the context of the prophet anticipating a time when God will inaugurate a new exodus where he will bring his people out of exile. He will redeem and restore his people who are now in exile in a brand new exodus. Chapter 51 is a call for God to begin to act now in bringing about a new exodus in the same way that he did at the first exodus. So verse 9 begins, awake, awake, clothe yourself with strength, O arm of the Lord.

Awake as in the days gone by, as in generations of old. Was it not you who cut Rahab to pieces? Rahab being another name for a sea monster. Was it not you who pierced that monster through? Verse 10, was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made a road in the depths of the sea so that the redeemed might cross over? A clear allusion to the exodus.

So again, Pharaoh is being portrayed as a sea monster, as Rahab, that God defeated when he led the Israelites, when he rescued them from Pharaoh and the Egyptians and led them through the Red Sea. Now the author Isaiah anticipates a rehearsal of that, a repetition of that in a new exodus. It's interesting, the Targum of Isaiah, the Aramaic translation of Isaiah at this point, actually in verse 9 identifies Rahab as Pharaoh in the text itself.

So the point is, you have a history. I could read other texts, and in apocalyptic literature, you have a dragon or sea monster that carries associations of chaos and evil, oppression, and satanic power. You have that sea monster over and over again in the Old Testament playing the role of representing human rulers and empires that are oppressive and oppose God and his people. So John is using a term; he has picked up a term that already brings a history of meaning with it.

So when John uses this imagery of a dragon or a sea monster, he is using an image that already connotes something specific. More importantly, it's interesting that if this is the case, then John is clearly telling us, in a sense, the true power by identifying this dragon as Satan as he does in chapter 9. Notice in verse 9, he tells us this great dragon, that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole

world astray. John clearly takes us back to Genesis 3. So it's as if John is saying this dragon now that he sees in chapter 12, this is the same satanic power that inspired other oppressive, godless, idolatrous, evil empires and rulers such as Egypt in the past now surfaces again in John's own vision in chapter 12.

The fact that this dragon is described back in verse 4 as having a tail that sweeps a third of the stars out of the sky and flings them to earth imagery comes right out of Daniel chapter 8 and verse 10, where a similar occurrence takes place. Some have tried to link this to a specific historical event; perhaps this is an image of the primordial fall of Satan where he brings demonic beings with him and the stars standing as we've seen elsewhere in Revelation, the stars often standing for angelic beings. So the picture may be that at his fall, Satan then drags and brings with him his demonic cohorts.

That's possible, although it may just be here that this is simply an indication of the power of this draconic being, the power of the dragon that John sees now, which is demonstrated by the fact that he can drag a third of the stars with his tail. Clearly, it's an illusion, though, back to Daniel chapter 8 and verse 10. But what happens then to introduce the third figure is the dragon pursues this woman for the sole purpose of devouring her child.

So the woman we've been told is pregnant, and she's about to give birth to a son. What makes it clear that this is the Messiah, that this is Jesus Christ himself, the Lion from the tribe of Judah back in chapter 5, and the Lamb who was slain from chapter 5? What makes that identity clear is that he is described in verse 5 as a child, a son, a male child who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. This is a clear allusion to chapter 2 and verse 8, which gets applied to Jesus Christ elsewhere in the book of Revelation.

So the child, the son that the woman is about to give birth to, is nothing less than Jesus Christ, the Messiah. I often like to tell people that besides Matthew 1 and 2 and Luke chapter 2, this is the most detailed account of the Christmas story that one finds in the New Testament. In a narrative form, although here we have it in an apocalyptic symbolic key, we find the birth of Jesus Christ narrated.

Now the author skips a lot by simply saying when the son is given birth to, he's immediately taken up to heaven. So it's almost as if the death, the life and death, and resurrection and exaltation of Jesus are all collapsed into one event. But clearly, John has already assumed the death of Jesus Christ in texts like chapter 5 by portraying him as a slain lamb.

This refers to the blood of Jesus Christ, the one who has died and is now alive. John assumes clearly that part of this is that the death of Jesus Christ is to be included

here as well. But the story then revolves around this woman giving birth to a son and the dragon trying to devour the son.

But as soon as the son is given birth to by the woman, the dragon's intentions to devour and kill the son are thwarted, and he is not able to do this. Immediately, we read this account of the woman fleeing into the desert in verse 6 to be kept there for 1260 days. I'll return to that because verse 13 is going to pick that back up again.

But what I want to pay attention to is in 7 through 12 we find an intervening section. In other words, if you took 7 through 12 out, the story would flow fairly well. But I think we find this intervening section that further interprets this event.

That further interprets the thwarting of Satan or the devil or the dragon to devour this child. Verses 7 through 12 will further describe and interpret that. It has a two-fold interpretation.

The first part is a vision of a battle in heaven where we're told that Michael and his archangels battle against Satan and his angels. What is significant about this is that one might expect that you would read it. God and his angels battled against Satan and his angels.

Instead you find Michael the archangel and his angels battling against Satan and his angels. In other words, there is no dualism in the book of Revelation. I think this is intentional because it says something about God's sovereignty over Satan.

One might say God himself does not need to fight Satan. His archangel, Michael, one of his angels, is sufficiently able to defeat Satan and his angels and cast him out of heaven. Behind all of this lies God's sovereignty, but far above any dualistic conflict between the powers of God and the powers of Satan.

Instead, God is not even involved in this battle. But all it takes is Michael, the archangel, and his angels to defeat Satan and cast them out of heaven. The author appeals to Daniel in chapter 10.

For example, in chapter 13 and verse 21 of Daniel chapter 10, we find this reference to Michael the archangel. Beginning with verse 13, I'll read verse 12. Do not be afraid, Daniel; since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.

But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me for twenty days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me because I was detained there with the king of Persia. And verse 21 also of that text, verse 21 says, But first I will tell you what is written in the book of the text, the book of truth.

No one supports me against them, that is, the king of Persia, the prince of Persia, except Michael, your prince. So, chapter 10 of Daniel provides this background of Michael doing battle. In this case against the prince or the angel behind Persia.

And now we find Michael once again, John drawing in that. Now, he reconfigures that for his own purpose to show. Now Michael is once again battling, but this time against the dragon, the sea monster, who is no one less than Satan himself.

Also, these texts seem to reflect Jewish tradition regarding the expulsion of Satan from heaven. And particularly the primordial expulsion of Satan from heaven. That most point back to having its genesis in Isaiah chapter 14.

And 12 through 14, 12 through 15, actually. Isaiah chapter 14 and then beginning with verse 12. We read, How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn.

You have been cast down to the earth. You who once laid low the nations, you said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven, I will raise my throne above the stars of God. I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain.

I will ascend above the tops of the clouds, and I will make myself like the most high. But you have brought yourself down to the grave, to the depths of the pit. Often, this text played a role in speculations about the expulsion of Satan from heaven at the beginning of creation. But what I want you to recognize is, John takes probably this notion in Jewish literature of the expulsion of Satan from heaven. And he gives it a very specific application.

And the question is, when does this happen? When does this battle and expulsion of Satan from heaven happen? John gives it an explicit application by suggesting that it happens at the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Notice in verse 11, in the hymnic part of this, the author said, and this is the second part of the interpretation, that is the hymn, the loud voice in heaven, in verses 10-12, that interprets this event, the voice says, they overcame him, that is the devil, the accuser, by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony. So I take it that John is telling us that this battle in heaven, between Michael and his angels and Satan and his angels, is an apocalyptic symbolic way of describing the defeat of heaven that happens as a result of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Which is the same way that Christ overcame back in chapter 5. And in chapter 1. Christ overcame because he was dead and now he was alive. Christ, as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, he conquered and overcame. How did he do that? Because he is the Lamb who was slain.

The hymns in chapter 5 celebrated Jesus was worthy to take the scroll because he overcame, through his death on the cross, to purchase people from all of humanity to be his kings and priests. So, I take it that John may be drawing on this idea of the expulsion of Satan from heaven, but he gives it a specific application. He uses it as an image to demonstrate that Satan was ultimately defeated through the death and resurrection of the person of Jesus Christ.

And again, I think chapters 10 and 12 function to interpret this heavenly battle. So this battle in verses 7-9 get interpreted by this hymn in chapters 10-12. The battle was God's victory over evil and the establishment of God's kingdom that came about by the death of Jesus Christ.

So we are not to see here a reference to an exclusively future event, nor is John referring to a primordial event in the past, a creation, or some other time. But John is using that imagery and giving it a specific application to refer to what happens because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It constituted a defeat of Satan.

And in fact, verses 10-12 then, which interpret the heavenly battle, demonstrate as a result of this verse 10, now have come the salvation and power and kingdom of our God. So with the death of Jesus Christ, defeating the powers of evil, defeating Satan, God's salvation and his kingdom have begun to take place. His kingdom has begun to unseat the kingdom of Satan and the rule of Satan.

So, in chapter 12, verse 11 further specifies the basis of verse 10. How has that salvation come? How has that reign come? How has the authority of Christ now been established? How has the accuser been hurled down? Through verse 11, through the blood of the Lamb, through the death of Jesus Christ, and on an ongoing basis through the suffering and even death of his people because of their faithful witness, that is how Satan has now been defeated. So we're introduced again to this concept of an ironic view of overcoming.

How do God's people overcome? How did Christ overcome and win the victory? Not through military might like Rome, but through the faithful witness of his Son, Jesus Christ, through the death of his Son, Jesus Christ, and through the suffering faithful witness of his followers, even to the point of death. In a sense, what we find in this section is reflected in Jesus' own teaching in the Gospels. For example, in Matthew chapter 12, where we find this notion because Jesus Christ now comes and casts out demons, in Matthew chapter 12, in response to the Pharisees who said, well, you cast out demons in the name of Beelzebul, in the name of Satan himself.

And Jesus says, using power language, using kingdom language, he says things, well, how can a kingdom stand if it's divided against itself? But he says, unless one binds

the strong man first, then only then can Christ's kingdom be established. And then he says, if I cast out demons in the name of Jesus Christ, or with the power of the Holy Spirit, if I cast out demons, then the kingdom has come. God's kingdom has arrived.

Why? Because by defeating the powers of evil, which will ultimately take place through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, by defeating the powers of evil, God's kingdom is already making inroads into the kingdom of Satan. We see that here in chapter 12, especially 10 through 12. With the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the kingdom has already come.

God's kingdom has already been inaugurated. The kingdom of Satan has already been unseated through the death of Christ, and through the suffering faithful witness of God's people, even to the point of death, Satan's kingdom continues to be dealt a blow. But verse 12, in preparation for the rest of chapter 12, verse 12 lets us in on a crucial element.

And that is, as a result of this defeat, while this spells rejoicing in heaven, it spells woe for the earth. Because now that Satan has been defeated because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and thrown down to heaven as symbolic of Christ's victory over Satan, this spells woe for the earth the sea, and all who dwell in it. And the reason at the end of verse 12, Satan now knows that his time is short.

He's already been defeated, but sort of like a dragon that's been slain, but in his death throes, he's allowed to, as some commentaries have said, he's allowed to flail about a little bit and kick about and cause problems and sufferings, and even death for the people of God. So what this then is suggesting for the church, the churches in chapters 2 and 3, for those who are suffering for their faithfulness, for those who are persecuted because of their faithfulness, even those who, like Antipas, have lost their lives because of their faithful witness for Jesus Christ, this is a reminder and a description of what's going on. Well, what is actually happening is Satan has already been defeated, and he's simply allowed to flail about in his final death throes because he knows his time is short, and wreak as much havoc as he can, and cause as much problem as he can for the people of God because he's already been defeated, and because his time is short, he's unleashed a final flurry of activity of persecuting and putting to death God's people.

And so this is meant to help them to see their situation in a new light. For those who are suffering persecution at the hands of Rome, this is meant to function as an encouragement and, again, to help them see their situation in true apocalyptic fashion, from a new perspective, that things aren't as they appear. Rome appears to be a huge, colossal empire, and it appears to be futile to try to withstand them and maintain a faithful witness, and they appear to be able to put to death whoever they want.

Now, having read Revelation 12, they are able to see the curtain has been raised, and they can see behind the scenes what's really going on. The result of their physical conflict with Rome is nothing less than part of a broader conflict that has its origin in heaven, with Satan being cast out and defeated by the blood of Jesus Christ and by the death of Christ, and now, having been defeated and thrown out of heaven, knowing that his time is short, he's able to flail about a bit, and that is the true source of the conflict that Christians face with the Roman Empire. Now, one other important, actually two other important features of this story is, first of all, the story then gets picked up in verse 13.

Having provided a further commentary on Satan's being thwarted from devouring this child in the form of the battle between Michael and his archangels, and expelling Satan from heaven, and further interpreting that through these hymns that indicate that the result of that is now the establishment of God's kingdom through the death of Jesus Christ, and the expulsion of Satan from heaven means that his time is short, and he's unleashing a last-ditch attempt to destroy God's people. Now, we resume the narrative, the story of Satan, the son, and the woman. In verse 13, we are now introduced to the woman who, post-birth of Christ and post-resurrection and ascension, we find the same woman, which then probably indicates that now, in continuity with the description of her back in the first two or three verses, now the same woman representing the people of God, but now including people from every tribe and language and tongue, now representing the church.

And I want you to notice how the story develops. First of all, the dragon decides to pursue her. Having been thwarted from getting at the son, now he goes after the woman.

But what happens is the dragon is apparently thwarted from getting at her as well. Here, the author begins to draw on Old Testament Exodus imagery by describing the woman as being pursued into the desert and by being given the wings of an eagle to fly into the desert. That language of being given wings like an eagle and going into the desert recalls the Exodus story again.

And we've already been introduced to that, to the Exodus story in terms of the beast and the dragon in association with Pharaoh. Here, the Exodus imagery continues. The woman symbolizing the people of God is now given, as the nation of Israel was, given wings like an eagle to go into the desert.

Here, the desert is clearly portrayed in verse 14 as a place of keeping, protection, and preservation. In Exodus chapter 19 and verse 4, we read God saying to the Israelites, I took you up as on eagles' wings. And so now we find the woman being given wings as an eagle.

So, the Exodus motif continues. And notice also the same temporal imagery, the 1260 days earlier in verse 6, and now the time, times, and half a time from Daniel. And as we've said previously, these probably are referring to the exact same time period.

That is, the entire period of the church's existence began in the first century with the churches in Asia Minor. This whole period is described as 1260 days, making clear the allusion back to Daniel. Or time, times, and half a time, which is another allusion to Daniel, but suggesting a period of time that is intense but short.

It won't last forever. A time that falls short of the perfect number of seven. It's only half of seven.

What that means is that the events of chapter 12 take place roughly at the exact same time as the events of chapter 11. The image of the woman being preserved in the desert is taking place at the same time as the two witnesses in chapter 11. In other words, another way to look at it is the author is describing the church's existence and the church's function from different perspectives.

The church can be described as a temple that is measured, showing its preservation even though it is persecuted. The church can be described as two witnesses, describing their faithful witness even in the face of opposition, persecution, and even death. And now the church is described as a woman who flees into the desert and is preserved and protected in the face of the opposition of Satan himself.

One other interesting feature in this story is the way that the dragon tries to exterminate the woman; the way he tries to exterminate the woman is through spewing out of his mouth a flood or a river. And clearly, we're in the realm of apocalyptic symbolism. Certainly, one would not want to suggest that a dragon arrived on the scene at some point in church history and, poured out water and spewed it out of its mouth.

But clearly, this is symbolism suggesting once again Satan's attempt to oppose the people of God. He has not been able to get at the son, so now he goes after the woman. And now representing the people of God, the church is made up of Jews, Jews, and Gentiles.

Now symbolizing his opposition, he pours out a flood. Often, in the Old Testament, we see the flood language as figurative of the persecution of the people of God. This may also, and in my opinion, I think it is probably correct to see this as sort of reflecting the image of the Red Sea.

Where the Red Sea was seen as a barrier, the Red Sea was seen as a threat to the people of God. Go back to Isaiah chapter 51 and verse 9 that we read, where the Red

Sea was seen as the home of the sea monster. And God defeated the sea monster at the crossing of the Red Sea.

So once again, this spewing forth of water could, in a sense, be seen as almost a reenactment of the exodus. In the same way that the Red Sea, according to Isaiah 51, the home of the sea monster, in the same way that it was a threat to the people of God, the same way it provided a barrier to the people of God, and threatened their security, threatened their livelihood, threatened their very lives. In the same way, now, Satan is once again trying to thwart God's people by spewing forth a torrent of water that is meant to drown them, harm them, and snuff out their lives and their existence.

Yet, in true symbolic fashion, we read that even that was thwarted. And even the earth opens up and swallows the water in a symbolic type of imagery. This shows that Satan's attempt to destroy this woman, having been thwarted from being able to devour his prey in the early part of chapter 12, the son now goes after the woman that he's also thwarted from being able to destroy as well.

So what happens next is the dragon decides to go after her offspring. And so that is what we have here; I think the offspring also symbolize the church or the people of God. Notice how they are described at the end of verse 12.

Her offspring are those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. That is exactly how the church is described elsewhere in Revelation and what it was supposed to do in chapters 3 and 4. So clearly the offspring of the woman is meant to represent or symbolize the church as well. Yet what is intriguing is that, apparently, the dragon is able to get at them.

We'll see that. I think that's what's going on in chapter 13. I'll introduce in just a moment. But in other words we have this rather strange picture.

The woman seems to represent the people of God, the church. But she is preserved in the desert like Israel was at the exodus. Yet at the same time, her children represent the people of God.

And apparently, Satan is able to get at them. So what's going on? I think once again, we see John looking at the people of God and the church from two different perspectives. On the one hand, like the woman, the church is preserved and kept and secure.

On the other hand, like her children, the church is subject to persecution and even to death at the hands of Satan, who is trying to destroy God and his people. A little bit like, for example, the temple that we saw in chapter 11. The temple was measured, showing its security.

Yet the outer courts were thrown to the Gentiles, suggesting it was still subject to persecution. The two witnesses were, on the one hand, apparently invincible, suggesting their preservation and protection by God. Yet, on the other hand, they appeared to be vulnerable at the end of the story, where they were put to death by the beast, suggesting that they were still subject to persecution and death at the hands of the beast.

So, I think the same thing is going on here. Satan is ultimately not able to destroy the church. It is preserved and protected.

Although he is still able to persecute its people by putting them to death, again, ironically, in the context of Revelation, John is clear that this is the way the saints overcome. Ironically, this is the way they actually defeat Satan through their death and, because of their suffering, faithful witness. So, the church is preserved, yet it is still persecuted. Satan is allowed to wreak havoc and persecute its members, yet he is not ultimately able to destroy it.

Once again, note how Revelation 12 unveils and uncovers the true source and nature of the church's conflict and the true struggle. They look out at the Roman Empire and they are confronted with its claims. Many of them are suffering because of their refusal to compromise.

One person has been put to death, and others now are going to be in the wake of that. So they look out and wonder if it is really worth it to try to take a stand against such a monstrosity. And what Revelation 12 does is lift the curtain.

Allow them to see behind the scenes to show them the true source of your conflict is Satan himself. Satan tried to kill God's Son, Jesus Christ, but was thwarted. And Satan now who is going after the people of God.

Who, yes, he can wreak havoc, and he will be able to persecute them and put them to death. But ultimately, the church will be protected. Ultimately, God's people will be preserved.

And so now, with that new perspective, they will be able to understand and see their situation in a new light. For those who are suffering persecution because of their faithful witness, especially two of the churches in chapters 2 and 3, this will be a source of encouragement to maintain their faithful witness and to be steadfast. But for the other churches, it will be a wake-up call to stop compromising and to instead take a stand.

And to maintain their faithful witness even if it means death. Despite the consequences that might bring, chapter 12, besides the fact, makes clear that Satan has already been defeated.

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Satan has been defeated. And what he is allowed to do to the people of God is simply his last-ditch effort in his death throes. His last ditch effort to flail about and cause harm to the people of God.

Now, in the next section, I want to kind of back up. We've looked at several details of the text. But I want to back up and look at the story again in all of chapter 2 from two different perspectives.

And I'm going to suggest that chapter 12 is the main plotline of chapter 12 of the story of the son, the woman, and the dragon. The story that takes place throughout this section and probably into chapter 13 as well. This entire story, the main plot of it, probably owes its existence to two stories.

One of them coming out of the Old Testament and one of them coming out of the Greco-Roman world. The author has probably constructed a story that resonates with some of the other visions John uses. John has constructed a story in chapter 12 that resonates with these two stories.

One from the Old Testament and one from the Greco-Roman world. In our next section, we'll look at those stories. And how they may help us make sense of some of the details of the text.

And how they help make a difference in actually reading and interpreting and shedding new light on additional light in Revelation chapters 12 and 13.

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his course on the book of Revelation. This is session 17 on Revelation 11-12, The Seventh Trumpet, The Woman, The Dragon, and The Son.