

A Journey Into the Heavens
The Seven Personalities of the Great Tribulation
February 24, 2016

Beginning with this lesson, we will temporarily accelerate our study of the book of Revelation until we come to chapter 19. There are two reasons for this. First of all, it will prevent us from getting bogged down in chapters 12-18 with things that we cannot fully understand or interpret. These chapters symbolically describe some literal events that occur during the latter part of the tribulation and cannot be fully understood from this point in time. Second, beginning in chapter 19, when we come to the marriage supper of the Lamb, we find literal happenings described with far less symbolism and are therefore much easier to interpret.

We have studied through the seventh trumpet. Although the trumpet sounds in 11:15, the actual events that will occur are not recorded until chapter 16.

The interim chapters, 12-14, record a lengthy interlude between the sounding of the seventh trumpet and the beginning of the seven vials of wrath. This parenthetical section describes seven personalities who play important roles during the latter part of the tribulation period.

I. The Sun-Clothed _____ (12:1-2)

This entire chapter symbolically describes the satanic hatred toward God's plan for the messianic line - Israel. The woman in these verses seems to represent Jacob, Rachel, and the tribes of Israel. (Genesis 37:9-10)

The sun-clothed woman does not specifically refer to Mary, the mother of Jesus, but seems to picture the nation of Israel as the source of the Messiah. That she is Israel and not just Mary is corroborated by the fact she is persecuted, beginning in verse 13.

II. The Great Red _____ (12:3-4)

There is no doubt as to the identity of this personality, because he is named in verse 9. The use of the symbolism of a dragon seems to indicate immense cruelty, and the color red denotes a bloodthirsty personality.

The seven heads and ten horns clearly relate him to the beast in 13:1. In 12:4 we find his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth... The word stars is often used in the Bible to refer to angels, as in Revelation 9:1.

The mission of the great red dragon is clear - to devour her (the sun-clothed woman's) child as soon as it was born (12:4). This phrase would certainly refer to at least three events that occurred in the life of Jesus.

We find these three events taking place in Scripture:

Matthew 2:16-18 - _____

Luke 4:28-29 - _____

Mark 15:13 - _____

These attempts were all futile and they all failed because of the power of God!

III. The Male _____ (12:5-6)

Christ's birth is stated in verse five, where he is identified as the One who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. Then, His ascension is mentioned, skipping His life, ministry, and crucifixion. The reason for this is that the emphasis of this section is Satan's war against Christ. Satan's plans to destroy Him failed, and His ascension proves that even having Him physically killed did not destroy the Messiah. Since Satan failed to kill the Messiah, he turns his wrath to the woman, who represents Israel, the messianic line.

Christians must never forget the devil has a special hatred for the Jewish people and has been the influence behind anti-Semitism from the times of Pharaoh and Haman to Hitler and the list goes on.

The details of his wrath upon Israel during the Great Tribulation are described in 12:13-17, but before that description the scene shifts from earth to heaven and the next personality.

IV. _____ (12:7-12)

Michael is the only angel in the Bible specifically called an archangel, who is the guardian of God's people (see Daniel 10:13 & 21 and Jude 9).

After Michael defeats Satan and his angels, Satan is cast out of heaven (12:7-9). It is clear from 12:10 that Satan's defeat in the war in heaven is connected with the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ. We also see according to verse 10 that Satan does have access to Heaven to accuse the brethren.

When Satan is no longer able to attack the male child or to accuse the saints, he focuses all his attention on the woman (Israel), described in verses 13-17. As a result of Satan's persecution, Israel will have to 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 (12:14).

Apparently, the fleeing remnant will find asylum in some wilderness place where God will protect and sustain them for those three and one-half times, or 3 1/2 years.

This remnant is undoubtedly the Jews who have turned to Christ because 12:17 identifies them as those which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

V. The _____ Beast (13:1-10)

The beast has already been mentioned in 11:7 as rising from the abyss; therefore, the sea may be symbolic of the abyss. The first beast represents the anti-Christ. The beast has seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy (13:1).

The seven heads may represent the seven continents over which he rules, and crowned horns may stand for a ten-nation confederacy that gives allegiance to the beast.

As great as this person is, he is actually only an agent of Satan. (13:2). The healing of the fatal women in verse three may refer to a counterfeit death and resurrection of the beast, or it could symbolically refer to the revival of a world dictator because power was given to all kindreds, tongues, and nations (13:7)

This power will continue for forty and two months, or 3 1/2 years (13:5). It is made clear in 13:4-6 that he is more than just another world dictator.

The wording of verse 9, If any man will have an ear let him hear, means to pay close attention to what will be said in verse 10. The message is clear. When God's plan is complete the captor will be taken captive and divinely disposed of!

VII. The _____ Beast (13:11-18)

In 16:13, 19:20, and 20:10 this second beast is called the false prophet. Thus, we have the "unholy trinity" - The Devil, The Beast, and the False Prophet. At no time does the second beast (or, false prophet) promote himself. Instead according to verses 15-17 what is his purpose?

The false prophet will not be content to control people through spiritual deceit. He will also institute measures to have complete control of commerce, producing a system whereby one can buy or sell only by worshipping the image of the beast and thereby receiving his mark.

The mark is described in 13:18 as Six hundred three score and six, or 666. Numerous attempts have been made to interpret this number using the numerical equivalents of letters in the Hebrew or Greek so this mystery might be solved. However no one in our day knows or can figure out the meaning of this number, but the day will come when it will clearly identify the beast as the anti-christ.

Thus Revelation 13 gives us much insight into the Great Tribulation period. It will be a time of one world ruler, one government - sanctioned religion, the worship of the beast, and one world economic system. Those who resist the world dictator, who is empowered by Satan, will be executed. As has already been mentioned it will be the most difficult time ever to be a Christian!

VII. The _____ (14:1-20)

Chapter 14 seems to answer two questions raised in the two previous chapters: what happens to those who refuse to receive the mark of the beast and are killed (vs 1-5), and what happens to the beast, his false prophet and his followers (vs 6-20)?

Verse 1 tells us of the 144,000 which seem to be the same group mentioned in chapter 7:4-8, and since they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts and the elders, they must be in heaven. Their work of witnessing is finished.

This group is further described as they which were not defiled of women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb (14:4).

Reference to the fact they were never married and were sexually pure could mean that during the tribulation they could not lead normal married lives because of their dedication to the Lord.

In 14:6-7, God's last call for repentance goes out through an angel to a world that persists in rejecting Him and that now openly denies Him.

It is clear from verse 8 the rest of the chapter 14 is like a table of contents for the remainder of the book. Another angel announces the fall of Babylon, which is God's name for the economic and political system of the beast and is described in chapters 17-18.

The third angel announces the terrible judgement that will take place upon those who worship the beast and receive his mark in verses 9-11.

After the Lord's stern warning to those who follow the beast, God has a word of comfort for those who will not yield to the beast but rather keep the commandments of God. (vs. 12-13)

Since it is evident that the beast can only be resisted at the expense of one's own life, the words of comfort in verse 13 that the Lord will allow them rest in the Spirit and that their works do follow them is given.

Next John sees a white cloud and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his hand a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle (14:14). There can be little doubt as to the identity of the Person pictured here - He is the Lord Jesus Christ, with a sickle in His hand, ready to begin judgement upon the earth. This is reminiscent of our Lord's parable in Matthew 13:36-43.

Revelation 14:20 gives us a quick glimpse of the Battle of Armageddon. The 1,600 furlongs, or 180 miles, may be literal, designating the area of judgement. This pictures the shedding of blood on an astronomical scale - a slaughter beyond anything the world has ever known.

With all of this in mind, once again our motivation is to be sharing Jesus with those that are in need of Him, and thanking the Lord that we do not have partake in such an astronomical tragedy!