

Book of Revelation

19. The Great Tribulation



Revelation 12 – 14

Introduction

As we have studied the Book of Revelation we have discovered that there will be a period of 1260 days or 3½ years when Satan will rule the world through the Antichrist and False Prophet. During this time men and women will be forced to worship the 'beast' and take his mark, or face economic boycott and death. This is known as the Great Tribulation. Although it may seem that Satan has been victorious, this will be the time of Satan's final defeat, and God will use His church to accomplish this.

Scripture Reading: Revelation 12:1-17, 13:8-10, 14:12-13

The vision of the 'woman and the dragon' gives an overview of the battle that is taking place from a heavenly perspective. In this study we will focus on the 'woman' and 'the rest of her offspring', and leave the topic of 'the man-child' until the next study.



Who do you think this 'woman' could be and why does the 'dragon' (Satan) want to destroy her? Look at the following verses: Revelation 12:1-2, 4; Genesis 3:15, Galatians 4:24-26, 28; Ephesians 2:6

(The 'woman' is a picture of the true church in the spiritual realm, clothed with the glory of God. This includes those from Israel who lived by faith, and those who have put their trust in Jesus Christ throughout all generations. Satan has always sought to destroy the seed of the woman as he knows this is who will bring about his final downfall.)



What happens to the 'woman' during the 1260 days of the Great Tribulation? Revelation 12:6, 13-14

(The 'woman' is pursued by the 'dragon', but God prepares a place for her so she is kept safe during this time. The desert is a place of spiritual refuge. Some believe it is the mountainous area outside Jerusalem where the Christians fled in A.D.70, while others believe it is safe havens in different countries of the world.)



When the dragon is unable to sweep the 'woman' away he goes off to make war against 'the rest of her offspring'. V17 Who do you think 'the rest of her offspring' are? Also see Revelation 13:7, Daniel 7:21-22, 25

(We can clearly see that the 'offspring' are the saints or believers who are oppressed by the Antichrist during the 3 ½ years. They are identified by the phrase; 'they obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.')

During this time there will still be many believers on earth, even if a 'first-fruit' rapture has taken place, and no doubt countless others will turn to Christ as they realize that God's word is true, and judgment is about to fall.



What words of counsel does Jesus give to the saints in these difficult times? Revelation 13:10b, 13:18, 14:12. What experiences have you gone through so far in your Christian life, where you have had to 'patiently endure?'

(Notice that each word begins in the same way:

- *'this calls for patient endurance and faithfulness'*
- *'this calls for wisdom'*
- *'this calls for patient endurance')*

When Jesus was crucified Satan thought he had triumphed. How wrong he was! Jesus conquered death and rose again. 1 John 3:8 says 'The Son of God appeared to destroy the devil's work'. Once again Satan will think he has triumphed, but he will soon discover otherwise.



In Daniel 7:21 we are told that the Antichrist defeats the saints, but in Revelation 12:11 we are told they 'overcome him'. How do we reconcile these two seemingly conflicting statements? Look at Ephesians 3:8-12, 1 Corinthians 1:18-19. How can you live in victory over Satan now?

Conclusion

Just as Jesus gained victory over Satan by His death on the cross, so God has chosen to use the church to bring about his final downfall. God sent His Son to destroy the works of the devil by redeeming a people who would defeat the devil by the power of His blood, by the word of their testimony and by loving not their lives unto death. In this way God will demonstrate His wisdom to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places, and He will be glorified by His church even in the midst of the Great Tribulation.

We do not need to wait for that time. God wants us to overcome the devil now. Just as the saints at that time will gain victory by the blood of Jesus and the word of their testimony, we can too. We may not face physical death, but if we are willing to deny self, and totally live for Jesus, the power of Satan will be broken in our lives. May we be a demonstration of the wisdom and power of the cross TODAY!