

27. The Desperation of the Dragon on the Earth

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that Satan will have the day come when he can no longer be the accuser of the saints. Instead, he will be cast to the earth so that he will only have a short time to deceive any more people. Through the next several chapters we will see that God will judge Satan and his followers. First this judgment will be on the earth and then it will be followed by the eternal judgment of Satan and all who reject the life Christ offers.

Revelation 12:11-12 says, “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.” Here, we see that the tribulation saints will have victory over Satan in the same way we have victory. First, we read that they will overcome him by the blood of the Lamb. In 1 Corinthians 1:23-24, Paul wrote, “But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” He went on to add, in 1 Corinthians 2:2, “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” The preaching of the message of the death and resurrection of Christ is the key to overcoming Satan by the blood of the Lamb. That will be the message of the tribulation saints just as it should be our message today.

Second, they will overcome him by the word of their testimony. The word translated “testimony” speaks of giving formal testimony in a court. 1 John 5:9-11 says, “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” The word translated “testimony” is used six times in these verses – four times it is translated “witness” and two times it is translated “testimony”. Here, we see that the Father is the One who has given the testimony about Christ. As a result, the saints in the tribulation will be quoting the Word of God, not just giving their own words. That is the same way Christ defeated Satan when Satan tempted Him in the wilderness.

Third, they will overcome him by the fact that they do not love their lives to the death. Here, we see that the tribulation saints will be willing to die for their faith. Heaven will rejoice because Satan is about to be defeated on earth. However, this will be a difficult time for the people on the earth. That is why we read that it will be a time of woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea. Satan will come down to the earth with great wrath because he knows his time is short. Most of the tribulation saints will be killed. However, they are not the people that will experience woe because 2 Corinthians 5:8 says, “We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” The tribulation saints can rejoice, even in death. In contrast, it is a time of woe for the people of the earth that continue to follow Satan. The fact that he has only a short time means that those who follow him will soon face eternal judgment.

We see that Satan will focus his wrath on two groups when he is confined to the earth. The first group is described in Revelation 12:13-14, where we read: “Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *Child*. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.” When Satan is cast to the earth, we see that the first group that will experience his wrath is the nation that gave birth to the male Child – Christ. That is the nation of Israel. That is why the second half of the tribulation is called the time of Jacob’s trouble. Jeremiah 30:7 says, “Alas! For that day *is* great, so that none *is* like it; and it *is* the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.”

Matthew 24:21-22 speaks about this time of Jacob’s trouble when those verses say, “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.” Our verses here, in Revelation, tell us how Israel is going to be saved out of this time. God said that the “woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place.” Here, we see that those Jews who escape from the land of Israel will be taken to a place where the Lord will protect them during this second half of the tribulation. That is why the earlier verses, in Matthew 24:15-20, warn Israel to flee immediately when the abomination of desolation (antichrist) sets up his image in the temple in Jerusalem. Only those who flee immediately will escape so the Lord can take them to a place of safety for the last half of the tribulation.

We see that the Lord promises to nourish Israel in this place of safety, “for a time and times and half a time.” This phrase is used in one other place in the Bible. Daniel 7:24-25 says, “The ten horns *are* ten kings *who* shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first *ones*, and shall subdue three kings. He shall speak *pompous* words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then *the saints* shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.” Here, we see that the tribulation saints will be given into the hands of the antichrist (also called the abomination of desolation, or the beast) who will come out of these ten kingdoms and gain power. The goal of antichrist will be to speak bold words against the Most High (God) and to persecute the saints of the Most High. As a result of God taking the people of Israel who escape to a place where they will be protected, we see that Satan and the antichrist will turn their great anger against the tribulation saints.

This second group upon which Satan will focus his wrath once Israel is protected is described in Revelation 12:15-17, where we read: “So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Before we come to the tribulation saints, we see how God will protect Israel.

We see, here, that Satan will try to completely destroy Israel one more time, but will fail. This attempt is described like a flood of water that the dragon (Satan) will spew out of his mouth. Isaiah 59:19-20 says, “So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun; when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him. ‘The Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,’ says the LORD.” In these verses, in Isaiah, we see that Isaiah describes this flood that will come from Satan as an enemy that will come to destroy Israel. It is at that time that God will preserve those in Israel who have become true followers of Him. The destruction of this enemy by the earth may be the result of the judgment on the earth that is mentioned in Revelation 11:19, where we read: “Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.” This army sent by Satan will be stopped by God.

Satan will be very angry and filled with rage when he cannot completely destroy Israel, especially the people of Israel who have recognized Christ as their Redeemer. In his rage, Satan will turn his anger against the tribulation saints. The tribulation saints are called “the offspring of Israel”, because when any person becomes a follower of Christ, we see that they are called sons of Abraham by faith. Galatians 3:6-9 says, “Just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, ‘In you all the nations shall be blessed.’ So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.” By the salvation that Christ provided, through His death and resurrection, people of all nations, including all tribulation saints, can come to Christ in repentance and faith and share in the blessings given by God.

We see two characteristics of those who become tribulation saints. First, we see that they keep the commandments of God. Second, we see the reason why they keep the commandments of God. They keep those commandments because they have the testimony of Jesus Christ. This is a key to understanding both the present and the future. Until we come to God, by repentance from the sin of unbelief, and place our faith in Christ, we have no desire or power to keep the commandments of God. When a person receives Christ, by faith, he or she is given a new nature that desires to please God. As we yield to the Holy Spirit, we are given the power to do those things that are pleasing to God. Philippians 4:13 says, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” This same thing will be true of the tribulation saints. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why Christ gives us the desire to please God when we become Christians. We also want to help them explain why Christ gave us the Holy Spirit to give us power to carry out those desires as we yield to Him. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.