

# Revelation

*Part Thirty-Four  
The Home Front  
(Revelation 12:13-17)*

*With Study Questions*

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*Pastor Paul Viggiano  
Branch of Hope Church  
2370 W. Carson Street, #100  
Torrance, CA 90501  
212-6999  
pastorpaul@branchofhope.org  
[www.branchofhope.org](http://www.branchofhope.org)  
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Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *Child*. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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 (Revelation 12:13-17).

## Introduction

Last time we spoke of how the war in heaven accomplished what World War I did not accomplish, that being a *War to End All Wars*. What WWI did produce was an environment that made Europe ripe for WWII. Being in the midst of the Depression, the U.S. was hesitant to enter WWII. Yet it finally did and off our young people went to Europe and Japan. And the hottest place in any war is generally called *The Front* (the line of contact of two opposing forces).

For the Christian, the Front, that line of contact, is between the seed of the woman (Christ) and the seed of the serpent (the devil and his darkness). As David said, **“the battle is the Lord’s” (1 Samuel 17:47)**. Yet in the 1940s America was quite a different place than it is today. While our soldiers were on the literal Front, there was also a thing called a *Home Front*.

There was a general feel that our nation was in the right and also a general feel that we would be the victors over some very evil things happening in Europe and the Pacific. But in order for this to be achieved,

efforts had to be made at home. There had to be sacrifices in the use of food, natural resources (like various metals), employment (people had to do jobs they wouldn't normally do), people sent letters and care packages, even Hollywood (which may sound shocking today) made movies which shed a positive light on our military efforts. It was a nationwide effort.

I open with this that we might appreciate that the advancement of the Gospel-the fulfillment of the Great Commission-this great effort to see the earth filled **“with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14)**, is not merely a job for missionaries, pastors, elders, and deacons.

When this passage speaks of the persecuted **“woman”** and **“the rest of her offspring”** these are entire communities of Christians. It is a battle that we all, regardless of whether or not we have an official post or office in the church are in.

**Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child<sup>14</sup> 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 (Revelation 12:13, 14).**

### **The Wings of Deliverance**

Having failed against Christ, and having been cast out of heaven, the devil now turns to Christ's body, the church. The establishment of the early church would be tempestuous. They needed to know, we need to know, that even though we have our names recorded, as it were, in heaven, the battle on earth continues.

The specific object of the dragon's persecution is the **“woman who gave birth to the male child.”** As we're going to see, this woman needs to be distinguished from **“the rest of her offspring”** who we'll read about in verse 17. The woman here is predominantly the faithful Israelites, that is, those among the Jews who trusted in Christ. They were the first Christians (Romans 1:16). I say the faithful Israelite because those who disregarded the teaching of Jesus on the Olivet Discourse were not **“given two wings of a great eagle”** to escape the wrath of the dragon through the Roman armies.

Let us be reminded what Jesus taught:

**But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. <sup>21</sup> Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it (Luke 21:20, 21).**

History tells us that those who fled to the mountains (specifically Pella) escaped the siege of Rome. Over a million Jews were killed in that horrible apocalypse, but not one who trusted in Christ.

That deliverance is here referred to as having been “**given the wings of a great eagle.**” This language is taken from Exodus.

**You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself (Exodus 19:4).**

The more contemporary writers have offered that this passage in Revelation, which they hold to be yet future, may be the US sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean because there is an eagle on the emblem. I submit that a sounder way to understand Scripture is to compare it to other Scripture utilization the same language or imagery.

The early church needed to know that there were rough waters ahead. Jesus taught this many times.

**Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you (John 15:20).**

Let us recognize that this is a posture the world is inclined to take against the church. So far from us peacefully coexisting in some equitable common kingdom with the unbelieving world, the Scriptures teach that there will be a hostility. Let us be ready to lovingly, yet boldly, and uncompromisingly, engage and persevere in the necessary warfare of that antagonism.

## A Time and Times and Half a Time

At this particular juncture in Revelation (over and against the futurist view, that this has yet to happen and the idealist, amillennial, view that this is speaking of the entire church age) the Jewish believer, who fled to Pella, will be **“nourished”** (basically, taken care of) **“for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.”**

What is this?

**“Time and times and half a time,”** which we see in Daniel 12:7 would be synonymous with **“forty-two months”** and **“one thousand two hundred and sixty days” (Revelation 11:2, 3)**. In other words, it’s one year plus two years plus and a half a year, so three-and-a-half years. The simplest and most straight-forward understanding of the event under question would be the attack on Jerusalem by the Roman armies which lasted three-and-a-half years.

As I have offered many times, we must read Revelation in light of how the recipients would have understood it. Then, when we find ourselves in similar situations, respond faithfully. It is very difficult to read this passage as merely future or as spanning the entire New Covenant era.

The early church would find itself in a particularly turbulent situation, where the devil, feeling exceptionally fierce, would unleash all he had.

**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. <sup>16</sup> 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 (Revelation 12:15, 16).**

### Swallowing the Flood

Having been cast down, the dragon is now referred to as **“the serpent.”** This **“great wrath”** which we read of in verse 12 is now described as the serpent spewing water **“out of his mouth like a flood.”** And the nourishing of the predominantly Jewish Christians is described here as **“the earth open[ing] its mouth and swallow[ing] up the flood.”**

We have noticed throughout our study of Revelation how apostate Jerusalem found itself, over and over, identified with the pagan nations by

which they were surrounded. Instead of being God's preserved people, they, like Jericho would have the trumpets blown against them. Yet here, we read of the New Covenant church being protected from the flood waters of darkness. This is reminiscent of terror of the Red Sea, where the "earth" by the power and providence of God swallows the flood.

Let us not lose the powerfully intimate image here of the swallowing of the flood. Our Lord is not some distant, indifferent, detached deity. He is a God who, through His Son, takes upon Himself and within Himself the poison of a sin-laden creation. The same language is used of death itself.

**He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces; The rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; For the Lord has spoken. <sup>9</sup> And it will be said in that day: "Behold, this is our God; We have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord; We have waited for Him; We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (Isaiah 25:8, 9).**

As has been stated numerous times, the theme of Revelation is *'the triumph of Christ (of Christianity) over all opposition, or evil.'* Neither the floods of persecution nor the sting of death will stay the hand of God and His love for His people. In light of this, we are called to stay the course and keep the faith, even in the midst of our heavy-handed surroundings.

## **A Short Time for The Devil**

In order for Revelation to continue to make sense, we must recognize the historical uniqueness of this situation. We had ended our previous message by asking what is meant by the devil having "**a short time**" in verse 12.

May I submit that a short time cannot be referring to the entire New Covenant era, as suggested by idealists and amillennialists. Nor is it the future seven-year tribulation as suggested by premillennialists and futurists. This would ignore the time-texts repeatedly given (Revelation 1:1, 3) and make all of this entirely insignificant to the recipients of the letter.

It makes much more sense to understand the "**short time**" spoken of here as referring to the devil's intense effort at stamping out the church before it becomes forever established. By the word and Spirit, power and

grace of God, the church was getting legs. It was being established as a global entity. The devil had won over the Old Covenant church which, more than once, is referred to as a **“synagogue of Satan” (Revelation 2:9; 3:9)**.

Once the temple would be destroyed, the devil’s efforts at stamping out, or winning over, the church would be a lost battle. He would muster all the evil he possibly could in that short time, that **“short time”** being one generation to spew his flood. This conclusion helps us make sense of passages we read elsewhere.

**Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom (Matthew 16:28).**

**And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly (Romans 16:20).**

This was a unique and very intense conflict. Yet it instructs us regarding the lengths God will go to preserve His body, the church. He will not save the infant church then abandon it as it grows. We can and should trust in that. Yet we must realize that battles will continue. In the final verse of this chapter, we see the crosshairs of the devil set elsewhere.

**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 (Revelation 12:17).**

### **The Rest of Her Offspring**

**“The rest of her offspring”** here must refer to the continuing, international church, made of Jew and gentile. That they **“keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ”** reveals that this is the faithful, persevering church. Let this be a lesson for churches who think the commandments are not of supreme importance in the New Covenant church.

This will shoot us into chapters 13-18 where the antagonist moves from Jerusalem to Rome in the widespread persecution of the early church.

The kingdom of God will ever grow and correspondingly the other kingdom in Scripture, called by Jesus the “**kingdom of Satan**” (**Matthew 12:26; Luke 11:18**), will ever diminish. Let us be encouraged by Calvin on this.

**When Christ commanded that his Gospel should be preached, he did not at all attempt a matter of doubtful result, but foresaw the approaching ruin of Satan. Now, since the Son of God cannot be deceived, and this exercise of his foresight relates to the whole course of the Gospel, we have no reason to doubt, that whenever he raises up faithful teachers, he will crown their labour with prosperous success.<sup>1</sup>**

Speaking of the coming of the Holy Spirit and His own physical absence, Jesus speaks of this ministry and of the judgment of Satan.

**But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. 8 “And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me; 11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged (John 16:7-11 NASB).**

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<sup>1</sup> Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). [\*Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke\*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 33). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.



# Questions for Study

1. What are ways you can contribute to the fulfillment of the Great Commission (pages 2, 3)?
2. Who is the persecuted woman in Revelation 12:13 and what happened to her (pages 3, 4)?
3. What should the church expect from its surrounding environment? How should we respond (page 4)?
4. Discuss the “time and times and half a time.” What do various people think this is referring to? What are your thoughts and why (page 5)?
5. Discuss the theme of revelation in light of the swallowing of the flood (pages 5, 6).
6. What is meant by the devil having a “short time” (pages 6, 7)?
7. Who are “the rest of her offspring” in verse 17 and what should we expect regarding the advancement of the Gospel (page 7, 8)?