

The Grace of Wrath

Studies in the Revelation of Jesus Christ

Text

Chapter 11:15 - 12:17

Topic

After he is thrown out of Heaven down to earth, the devil goes about in a murderous rage seeking whom he may devour

Title

"The Devil Went Down to Gore 'Ya"

Introduction

Pam was so troubled by it, she wanted to report it to the police. Or, at the very least, to eBay. Instead she called me at work.

She had just received payment for an auction item. Along with payment, she said that the seller had included a weird, threatening photograph of himself.

Well, of course I was upset. First thing I did when I arrived home was take a look at the photo.

Sure enough, it was disturbing. It was of a guy with a giant mallet in one hand... And a watermelon in the other.

It was Ron Gallagher.

He probably thought he was being generous, giving Pam his autographed fan-pic. **Little did he know the effect it would have since she had no idea who he was.**

Do you know who Gallagher is? He's a comedian who uses props in his act, especially watermelons, which he smashes with a giant mallet.

If you sit in the front row of his show, you're sure to get wet, and messy, as he smashes lots of things besides watermelons.

You've probably been to other shows where you are warned you'll get wet depending upon where you're seated.

Seating is important in our text in the Revelation of Jesus Christ. The verses talk about both the wrath of God (11:18) and the wrath of Satan (12:12) affecting those who dwell upon the earth during the last half of the Tribulation.

It will be messy. We might say that all the inhabitants of the earth will all have a front row seat to wrath.

We won't; and by "we," I mean the believers of the church age. We will be seated before God's throne in Heaven (11:24) while wrath is raining upon the earth.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 From Where You Will Be Seated, You'll Be Spared From The Wrath Of God, and #2 From Where You Will Be Seated, You'll Be A Spectator To The Wrath Of Satan.

#1 From Where You Will Be Seated,
You'll Be Spared From The Wrath Of God

(11:15-19)

Jesus took a scroll from His Father's hands and began to open its seven seals.

When He opened the seventh seal, it revealed seven trumpets that were to be blown, in order. We've heard six of them so far in this book, and have seen the events associated with them.

Now we hear the seventh and final trumpet blast. It is a spectacular note of triumph.

Rev 11:15 Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

The seventh trumpet is momentous. It reveals the final strategies of our heavenly Father to redeem creation.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee points out that the word "kingdoms" is singular. Though we see many sovereign nations, and talk of the succession of various kingdoms throughout history, the Bible is more concerned with who is ruling the whole world as its king.

Who *is* ruling? The Bible says that Satan is "the god of this world" (Second Corinthians 4:4), and "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31), and "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). Those are serious titles.

When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, the devil offered the Lord all the kingdoms of this world if He would just bow down and worship him. He thought of himself as the king over all of them - past, present and future.

Jesus did not dispute Satan's claim upon the kingdoms of men.

But it wasn't by bowing down to the devil that Jesus would redeem the kingdoms of men and become king. It was by being lifted-up on the Cross, at Calvary, in His crucifixion.

The verb tense of "have become" indicates an absolute certainty about Jesus' kingship, *before* the fact is accomplished. It does not mean we are, in some sense, already in the kingdom.

When we talk about the kingdom of God, we're not talking about a mystical, spiritual rule of God over the earth. We are talking about a literal kingdom, with Jesus ruling from the earthly city of Jerusalem.

The kingdom of God is not yet; it is coming. It is coming at the end of the seven year Tribulation, with the return of Jesus Christ to earth.

[Rev 11:16](#) And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God,

When we first were introduced to the twenty-four elders we gave reasons why we believe they represent the church, resurrected and raptured to Heaven prior to the beginning of the Tribulation.

"Thrones" is translated *seats* in the King James Version of the Bible. Any seat in the throne room of Heaven is itself a throne.

I'm thinking it's stadium seating of some kind, because, after all, there are going to be billions of Christians around the throne.

Somehow there are no nosebleed seats. We will all be full participants.

This is at least the fourth time we've seen the church fall prostrate before the Lord in adoring worship. We'll see it again in chapter nineteen.

It should encourage us to be full participants, now, in our worship. It doesn't mean we must fall down; that's something we will do plenty of in Heaven. It means we should engage, along with others who assemble, in worship that is appropriate.

Rev 11:17 saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.

Because God is "almighty," He is able to hold everything together while working out His plan to redeem lost mankind and the fallen creation.

He "is and was and is to come" reminds us that God has been working-out His plan of salvation since eternity past.

"You have taken Your great power and reigned" means the time will come at the seventh trumpet for God to finish out His plan.

Rev 11:18 The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth."

Throughout the Tribulation, God is seeking to save men from every nation. Instead they are "angry" at His seeming interference, and reject His servants and His salvation.

God's "wrath" is not at all like human anger. It's not revenge, which Klingons say is a dish best served cold.

It is His measured but necessary response to sin. For a believer, God's wrath has been taken by Jesus on the Cross. For the nonbeliever, it is coming.

This declaration of the final judgment comes with still time to repent. In wrath God remembers mercy and seeks to save. He keeps warning that a day is coming when all offers to be saved will be off the table. But until then He is not willing that any should perish.

God wants to reward you, and He will. God is not willing you should perish (be destroyed), but you will, if you do not repent.

Rev 11:19 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.

People are fascinated with finding the lost ark of the covenant, which was a copy of this one you read about in Heaven.

I don't think it will be found. And, anyway, it doesn't matter if it is, because God's presence will not be in the earthly Tribulation Temple.

The physical phenomena mentioned - "lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail" - announce the final judgments coming upon the earth.

You see, when the seventh trumpet is blown, it reveals seven bowls of God's wrath, of His final judgments, poured-out in rapid succession upon Christ-rejecting men on the earth.

We will be safe, seated in Heaven, worshipping God.

It's become fashionable to accuse us pretribulationists of being escapists, wanting to leave earth behind to fend for itself. They speak of the so-called "secret rapture," as if it were a recent, made-up teaching.

Look, this isn't our plan; **it's God's plan.** God determined to remove the church prior to the Tribulation, and to keep us from the day of wrath that is to come upon the earth. He's the One Who will seat us on thrones, in Heaven, while His wrath is being poured-out during the seventh trumpet blast.

#2 From Where You Will Be Seated, You'll Be A Spectator Of The Wrath Of Satan

(12:1-17)

Signs and symbols get a bad rap in the Revelation. People always say the book is impossible to interpret, because, after all, there are so many signs.

As we are fond of pointing out, signs and their symbols are designed to communicate, not to confuse. They are a universal human language.

True, there are odd signs:

- The Newcastle Tramway Authority posted a sign saying, *Touching Wires Causes Instant Death. \$200 Fine.*

- Here's another: *Garbage Only, No Trash*.
- One more: *Sign Not In Use*.

Those are the exceptions, not the rule. Signs and their symbols help us.

The opening verses of chapter twelve are at once the weirdest *and* the clearest of these signs and symbols.

Revelation 12:1 Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.

There is only one other place in Scripture where you see the sun and the moon and twelve stars. It is in Genesis, chapter thirty-seven.

Joseph tells his family about a dream, saying,

Genesis 37:9 "...Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me."

The "sun, the moon, and the eleven stars" represent Joseph's father and mother and brothers, the patriarchs of the tribes of Israel. Joseph is the twelfth star. The sun, the moon, and the twelve stars thus represent the nation of Israel. We know this is the correct interpretation because of the very next verse in Genesis thirty-seven, which says,

Genesis 37:10 So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father [Jacob] rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?"

Jacob interpreted it for us. The woman of Revelation Twelve is the nation of Israel. It was through the nation of Israel that your Savior came as God and man.

God promised Adam and Eve that He would send a Savior into the world. He would be born of a woman from the human race. As the Bible unfolds, God continually narrows down the lineage of the promised Savior. God chooses Abraham to establish a new nation, the nation of Israel. The Savior would be born to a descendant of Abraham's. He would be born to a Jewish woman.

Yes, that woman was Mary; but the focus here isn't on her, except that she was that Jewish woman.

Revelation 12:2 Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.

You might say that Israel was "with child" throughout her history, until He was born. That history is marked by constant pain, as the nation so often disobeyed God, and was disciplined. Nevertheless God was true to His promise.

Revelation 12:3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.

He is identified in verse nine as "that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan."

When we get to chapter seventeen we'll see that the description of heads, horns, and diadems refers to Satan's past and future rule over the kingdoms of the earth.

Revelation 12:4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

"Stars of heaven" is an Old Testament title for angels. When Satan fell into sin he took with him one-third of the angels in Heaven. The phrase "threw them to the earth" means that Satan and his fallen angels operate on the earth against the human race.

The gory imagery of the devil standing before the woman seeking to devour her child is a symbolic summary of Satan's continual interference with the birth of the promised Savior. Satan knew that the Savior would be born of a Jewish woman and so he has tried throughout history to thwart that birth.

Satan was behind the very first murder. When Cain killed Abel, Satan was attempting to cut-off the line through which the Savior would be born.

When God began to reveal His plan to establish a new nation using Abraham, Satan's efforts became focused on destroying his offspring. Biblical history is full with his diabolical schemes:

- At the birth of Moses, Pharaoh ordered the death of all male children born to Jewish women.

- During the days of David, King Saul and others repeatedly attempted to kill David, through whom your Savior was promised to come.
- The book of Esther records the attempts of a man named Haman to exterminate the Jewish race.
- When Jesus was born, King Herod issued a decree to slaughter the Jewish babies.

Extra-biblical history is full with extermination accounts. The holocaust was just the most recent.

Despite all of the devil's murderous designs to "devour" Jesus, He was born through Israel:

Revelation 12:5 She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

Jesus "**was** to rule," but, instead, "was caught up to God." Something happened. The Jews rejected Jesus as their king, and the kingdom was therefore put on hold.

Between that event and the next verse in our text about two thousand years have already passed. The Revelation picks-up the story in the very middle of the Tribulation, as we read,

Rev 12:6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

This speaks of Israel being divinely protected for the last half of the Tribulation. Jesus said the same thing in Matthew twenty-four, warning Jews living in Jerusalem and Judea to flee for their lives.

Some have suggested that the "place prepared by God" is the city of Petra. Maybe; it's a good candidate, geographically.

Rev 12:7 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, Rev 12:8 but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.

In the Book of Job we learn that Satan still has access to Heaven. God calls him there to give a report of his activities.

His normal base of operation seems to be the atmosphere around the earth. At the blowing of the seventh trumpet, just past the middle of the Tribulation, he will be fully and finally cast down to the earth by the archangel, Michael, in what is described as "war in Heaven." His privileges will be revoked. They'll change the access codes at the gates.

He will only have three and one half years on the earth until he is cast into the abyss for one thousand years. All the fallen angels, those we call demons, will be on the earth at once with him until they, too, are incarcerated.

Revelation 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

A "loud voice" makes a proclamation in Heaven. We know it is a human voice because he (or she?) says Satan is the accuser of "our" brethren.

Heaven has an announcer. Whoever it is he lets all the inhabitants know that Satan and his demons will not be allowed access to Heaven ever again.

The word “salvation” should be translated “**the** salvation.” It refers to the total, final, complete redemption of all the fallen creation.

Although still three and one half years away, it is so certain that the voice can proclaim “the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ, **have come.**” The end is inevitable; it will happen just as we are reading.

Satan’s primary activity through the ages is mentioned. He is “the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night.” Read Job chapters one and two and you see exactly how this plays out.

Satan’s accusations mean nothing because our sins are forgiven by the Lord. We are “in” Him, and when the Father sees us, He sees Jesus.

Revelation 12:11 "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.

Revelation 12:12 "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."

Revelation 12:13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child.

In verse eleven, believers are in view; in verse twelve, nonbelievers; in verse thirteen, the Jews.

The language used in verse eleven describes the defense of a martyr. Secure in the “blood of the Lamb,” he or she won’t waver from giving a “testimony” of the grace and forgiveness of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

You'd think the devil would cut nonbelievers some slack; but his bloodlust won't allow it.

Verse thirteen continues the Old Testament symbolism of Israel as the woman through whom the Messiah was born. Satan will turn his wrath upon exterminating the Jews. If he can kill every last Jew on planet earth, so that there are none left at Jesus' Second Coming, he can defeat the Word of God.

Revelation 12:14 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.

The “eagle” is *not* a reference to the United States. That’s wishful thinking. The only reason anyone thinks it is because the eagle happens to be our national symbol. The eagle has been used by many nations, past and present, including Nazi Germany. Wikipedia lists at least twenty-four nations which presently use an eagle.

God Himself is the “wings of the eagle,” not any nation on the earth. Check-out Exodus 19:4 and Deuteronomy 32:11-12 where the Lord compares His protection of Israel to eagle’s wings.

Like a mother eagle carrying her young to safety, so God will protect a remnant of the Jews.

Revelation 12:15 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.

“Like a flood” alerts us that this is figurative language. The devil’s attack will be sudden and terrifying, like the bursting of a dam threatening everything in its path.

Revelation 12:16 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.

If Satan’s attack is compared to a flood, God’s protection will be like a drain that “swallowed up the flood.”

This reminds me of the Green Lantern, making things from his power ring that are appropriate to save the day.

Revelation 12:17 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.

The “rest of her offspring” are believing Jews. Those who immediately flee will be kept safe. So the devil will go after the rest of the Jews - any Jews - to kill them.

All the while, **you** will be safe from His wrath, seated in Heaven, falling before God in worship.

Even before we arrive in Heaven, there are verses indicating we are *already* seated there. Ephesians 2:6 speaks of us as "raised... up together, and made [to] sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

What does that mean? Colossians 3:1 gives us a commentary on what it means:

Col 3:1 If [since] then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

Jesus was raised from the dead. When you become a Christian, you share in the benefits of His resurrection. Spiritually speaking, you, too, are raised from the dead, empowered by God the Holy Spirit to walk in newness of life.

You are to approach life now knowing you will be seated on a throne, in Heaven. Your seat is reserved. It is so sure, so secure, that you can proceed as if you were seated there right now.

That destiny, if embraced, will affect *everything* else you think about and do.

Are you destined for the throne? You are if you've repented of your sin, and trusted Jesus Christ to save you.

If you are not yet seated in heavenly places, *you can be*. Jesus came to seek and to save **you**. His grace is operating on your heart, right now, freeing your will to choose Him.

Come to the Lord, Who is risen from the dead; confess your sin; be saved.

