

Historist – The Woman and the Child

In Revelation 12:13-17 it's written:

Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. 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. 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. 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. 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.¹ (NKJV)

Uriah Smith expounds on this passage:

“But little comment is necessary on the verses last introduced. Suffice it to say that here we are again carried back to the time when Satan became fully aware that he had utterly failed in all his attempts against the Lord of glory in his earthly mission; and seeing this, he turned with ten-fold fury, as already noticed, upon the church which Christ had established. Then we have again brought to view the church going into that condition here denominated being "in the wilderness". This must denote a state of seclusion from the public gaze, and of concealment from her foes. That church which during all the dark ages trumpeted lordly commands into the ears of listening Christendom, and flaunted her ostentatious banners before gaping crowds, was not the church of Christ; it was the body of the mystery of iniquity. The "mystery of godliness" was God manifested here as a man; the "mystery of iniquity" was a man pretending to be God. This was the great apostasy, the mongrel produced by the union of heathenism and Christianity. The true church was out of sight; in secret places they worshipped God; the caves and the hidden recesses of the valleys of the Piedmont may be taken as representative places, where the truth of the gospel was sacredly cherished from the rage of its foes. Here God watched over his church, and by his providence protected and nourished her.

The eagles' wings given her appropriately signify the haste with which the true church was obliged to provide for her own safety when the man of sin was installed in power, together with the assistance God provided her to this end. The like figure is used to describe God's dealing with ancient Israel. By Moses he said to them: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself"².

The mention of the period during which the woman is nourished in the wilderness as "a time and times and half a time", the exact phraseology used in Daniel 7:25, furnishes a key for the explanation of the latter passage; for the very same period is called in verse 6 of Revelation 12, "a thousand two hundred and threescore days". This shows that a "time" is one year, 360 days; two "times", two years, or 720 days; and "half a time", half a year, or 180 days, making in all 1260 days; and this being symbolic, signifies 1260 literal years.

The serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood to carry away the church. By its false doctrines the papacy had so corrupted all nations as to have control absolutely, for long centuries, of the civil power. Through it Satan could hurl a mighty flood of persecution against the church in every direction; and this he was not slow to do. (See reference to the terrible persecutions of the church in remarks on Daniel 7:25) From fifty to one hundred million were carried away by the flood; but the church was not entirely swallowed up; the days were shortened for the elect's sake.³

"The earth helped the woman" by opening its mouth and swallowing up the flood. The Reformation of

1 – NU-Text and M-Text omit *Christ*

2 – Exodus 19:4

3 – Matthew 24:22

the sixteenth century began its work. God raised up the noble Luther and his colaborers to expose the true character of the papacy, and break the power with which superstition had enslaved the minds of the people. Luther nailed his theses to the door of the church at Wittenberg; and the pen with which he wrote them, according to the symbolic dream of the good elector Frederick of Saxony, did indeed span the continent, and shake the triple crown on the pope's head. Princes began to espouse the cause of the Reformers. It was the dawning of religious light and liberty, and God would not suffer the darkness to swallow up its radiance. Tetzal, the indulgence-peddler, swelled and bellowed with wrath, and Pope Leo roared with rage; but all in vain. The spell was broken. Men found that the bulls and anathemas of the pope fell harmless at their feet, just as soon as they dared exercise their God-given right to regulate their consciences by his word alone. Defenders of the true faith multiplied. And soon there was enough Protestant soil found in Switzerland, Germany, Holland, England, Norway, and Sweden, to swallow up the flood of papal fury, and rob it of its power to harm the church. Thus the earth helped the woman, and has continued to help to the present day, as the spirit of the Reformation and religious liberty has been fostered by the leading nations of Christendom.

But the dragon is not yet through with his work. Verse 17 brings to view another and a final outburst of his wrath, this time against the last generation of Christians to live on the earth. We say the last generation; for the war of the dragon is directed against the remnant of the woman's seed; that is, the remnant of the seed, or individuals, that constitute the true church; and no generation but the last can truthfully be represented by the remnant. If the view is correct that we have already reached the generation which is to witness the closing up of earthly scenes, this warfare against the truth cannot be far in the future.

This remnant is characterized by the keeping of the commandments of God, and having the testimony of Jesus Christ. This points to a Sabbath reform to be accomplished in the last days; for on the Sabbath alone, as pertaining to the commandments, is there a difference of faith and practice among those who accept the Decalogue as the moral law. This is more particularly brought to view in the message of Revelation 14:1-12

It may be proper to notice that according to the testimony of this chapter, three powers are made use of by the devil to carry out his work, and hence all are spoken of as the dragon, he being the inspiring agent in them all. These are, (1) pagan Rome; (2) papal Rome; (3) the two-horned beast, our own government under the control of apostate Protestantism, which is the chief agent, as will hereafter appear, in making war upon those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus.”⁴

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4 – Uriah Smith (1897) “Daniel and the Revelation” p:213-214 [free cut-down PDF version]
(www.end-times-prophecy.org/daniel-revelation.pdf)