

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

"Satanic Persecution of Israel"

Revelation 12:13-17

Introduction

1. This is one of the most exciting chapters in the Bible. It is certainly one of the most important. It provides a summary of the history of Israel and the Messiah from Abraham to the Tribulation Period (vv. 1-6).

2. Here is recorded the marvelous truth of Michael's victory over Satan in a conflict in heaven (vv. 7-12). It demonstrates that Satan pours out his wrath upon earth-dwellers (Tribulation Period) as his efforts for the overthrow of Israel grow dimmer (v. 12).

3. The scene is earth. Israel is still the opponent of Satan. The death struggle is given in dramatic terms. Two items about the event are prominent:

1. PERSECUTION OF THE TOTAL NATION vv. 13-16.

a. In the land v. 13.

The man child (the Messiah) has been taken to heaven (v. 5). With the ascension of the Messiah, the Devil, having been cast to the earth, pours his energies against the nation in general (the woman). The pronoun "which" means "which very one" brought forth the man-child. There is no reasonable doubt: the woman is Israel, not the church or Mary. The event of persecution probably coincides with the death of the witnesses (11:7) and the broken covenant (Dan. 9:27). The final days of the Tribulation have begun (Matt. 24:15-22).

b. In the wilderness vv. 14-16.

1) The flight v. 14. Under the figure of the woman, the nation Israel flees into the wilderness. This is due to the dreadful persecution experienced in the populated areas. The two wings given to Israel represent rapidity of exit and guaranteed protection. The whole event of "eagles wings" is an O.T. concept (Ex. 19:4; Deut. 32:11, 12).

2) The place v. 14. Israel flees to "her place." This suggests that God has prearranged the whole event. A number of passages indicate that the Lord will care for Israel in this time of great need (Isa. 26:20; 27:1; 59:19). The O.T. had cities of refuge (Deut. 4:41-49). It is very likely that God has some cities of refuge for

Israel at this time, too (Dan. 11:41). Today this area can be visited and is called Petra.

3) The time v. 14. While in her wilderness refuge, Israel is preserved by God. On the one hand, she is "nourished" or positively protected. On the other hand, she is untouched by Satan, being kept "from the face of the serpent". The time involved is "times" meaning two years, "time" meaning one year, and "half a time" meaning half a year. This all adds up to 1260 days, 42 months, or half of the seven year Tribulation Period (cf. v. 6; 11:2).

4) The problem v. 15. While God intervenes for Israel, Satan moves with his full fury against her. The "flood" mentioned here may well be a full tide of armies sent by Satan, under Antichrist, to destroy the nation. What was predicted early (Gen. 3:15) Satan continues to relentlessly pursue!

5) The solution v. 16. It is an enormous miracle of God. Israel is preserved by the earth responding to overcome the armies of Satan. Apparently this is a reference to some sort of physical disturbance on the earth which defeats the armies (e.g. since it is desert land, it may be a sand storm). The siege in the city of refuge will be broken by divine intervention of some sort.

2. PERSECUTION OF THE PARTIAL NATION v. 17.

a. Identified

It is certain that the woman is Israel, for here she still has the remnant of her seed on earth. The church could not be included in this because the total body must be raptured (1 Thess. 4:13-18 where all "in Christ" go up). But here is the fulfillment of the final rampage of Satan (under Antichrist) against Israel (Zech. 14:1-4). Persecution is followed by ultimate victory (Zech. 12:1-9). This is the second advent of our Lord to the earth (Rev. 19:11-21). It is the coming of the Deliverer out of Zion (Rom. 11:25, 26).

b. Characterized

Two marks are given for this remnant: obedience to the O.T. and acceptance of the N.T. They are "completed Jews" (Rom. 2:17-29). This shows that not all Israel is true Israel (Rom. 9:6).

Conclusion Just as surely as these events relating to Israel will take place, so God's promise is sure to save the one who believes on His Son Jesus Christ (John 3:36).