

SATAN PERSECUTES THE WOMAN
REVELATION 12:13-17

Well let's turn in our Bibles please to the book of Revelation chapter 12. We want to once again read together the entire chapter since it forms a single unit of thought, even though we're taking it piece by piece because of the volume of material that's there. Nevertheless, it does form a very definite unit of thought. So follow along then as I read Revelation 12, verses 1 through 17:

“¹ And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: ² and she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. ³ And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. ⁴ And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. ⁵ And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. ⁶ And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

“⁷ And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, ⁸ and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. ¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. ¹¹ And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. ¹² Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

“¹³ And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. ¹⁴ And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. ¹⁵ And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. ¹⁶ And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. ¹⁷ And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Revelation chapter 12 opens to us the invisible spiritual world, and reveals to us the spiritual conflict that lies behind and shapes everything we see and experience in the material world.

What we see and experience in life always has a deeper and an unseen narrative behind it. And that deeper and unseen narrative that is behind everything we see in life, is the war that's going on between Christ and Satan.

This war between Christ and Satan is what shapes and drives all the events that occur here upon the earth. God first created the world and mankind, and when it was finished, it was pure and it was good. But Satan came along, and through his temptation of Eve, he caused the fall of humanity into sin and brought them under the wrath of God. Satan ruined mankind and Satan ruined the world by getting Adam and Eve to rebel against God and to reject His authority over them.

But God was not going to be defeated by Satan. God was not going to allow his destructive work to stand. In Genesis 3 and verse 15, God promised that He would raise up a Savior of mankind from the seed of the woman, and that Savior, who is Jesus Christ, would destroy the Devil and all of his works. That was the promise of Genesis 3 and verse 15.

Well in due time, this promise was kept, this Savior was born, and His birth is the subject of Revelation chapter 12. We saw a couple of weeks ago in verses 1 to 6, that when the nation of Israel brought forth Jesus, Satan tried through his human instrument, King Herod, to destroy Christ. Satan was defeated in his effort to destroy Jesus, and instead, throughout the life of Jesus, and especially in His death and resurrection and ascension, Jesus defeated and overcame Satan at every single point.

By His life and death and resurrection, Christ defeated Satan, and this laid the groundwork for Michael and his angels to defeat Satan as well, as we saw last week in verses 7 to 12 of this same chapter. There we saw Satan cast out of heaven, and his ability to accuse believers before the throne of God terminated. Because of the triumph of Christ over Satan, not only was the groundwork laid for the victory of the angels over Satan, provision was also made for the victory of believers over Satan.

And so we saw in verse 11 that by their faith in Christ and His substitutionary atonement as the Lamb of God, and by their relentless witness of Christ's saving grace and gospel, and by their willingness to forfeit their lives before they denied their Savior—by these things, believers overcome and conquer Satan. They defeat his kingdom, and they do so by advancing the kingdom of Christ over the whole world. The borders of Satan's kingdom are continually pushed back, as believers work to expand the kingdom of Christ around the globe.

Now even though Christ and the angels and believers have conquered Satan, cast him out of heaven, and overcome him, this does not mean that Satan has given up the fight and has now become passive. Satan has not sunk into some hopeless despair and surrendered the field—far from it. Satan is full of anger over his defeat at the hands of Christ. He is enraged that he has been cast out heaven and down to earth, where he awaits his final judgment.

And knowing he has but a short time left before he is cast into the lake of fire, Satan is determined to do all the damage he can before his final demise. He cannot destroy the souls of believers, because they are preserved and protected by Jesus Christ. But he can assault their bodies with his persecutions. He can assault their minds with his lies. And this of course is what he does in this age.

The Devil's fury against believers is introduced to us in verse 6. It says, "And the woman," that is, the church, the covenant community of the people of God, "fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days." As we expounded verse 6 in a previous message, we saw that the covenant community of the people of God was seen to flee into the wilderness; that is, into a place of protection from Satan, where God cares for her, where God protects her, and where God provides for her.

What was introduced to us in verse 6 is now expanded and explained in verses 13 through 17, which is the passage that is under our consideration together today. Verse 6 is now taken up in verses 13 to 17, and greatly expanded and more fully explained.

So in the first place then this morning, let us consider together the motive for Satan's persecution of believers. Now this motive is found in verse 13. Notice it says, "And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child." Satan of course, as we saw last week, is now defeated. He was defeated at the cross, and his defeat was publicly declared when he was cast out of heaven. He has been utterly humiliated before the whole spiritual world, before God, before the good angels, and even before his own demons, who share in his defeat.

He should be utterly ashamed, but Satan knows no shame. He knows no humility. Out of his defeat arises a boiling anger, and out of this anger comes hatred and persecution for that which represents his defeat. Satan can no longer persecute Jesus Himself, as we saw him doing while Christ was here on earth. Satan can now no longer persecute the manchild. So he now persecutes the woman who brought Him forth. Satan cannot attack the Head of the church, so he now persecutes the body of the church, who are believers in Christ.

Perhaps an illustration would help. Satan is like a criminal who has been declared guilty by the judge, who has been sentenced to death by the judge, and who has been consigned to death row by the judge to await his just punishment. But instead of admitting his guilt and accepting the justice of his punishment, the criminal is filled with anger and rage at getting caught and being condemned, and as a result, because he cannot attack the judge directly, he then puts out a hit on the judge's family.

When Satan saw that he was cast out of heaven and cast down to the earth, he then begins a furious persecution of the covenant community that had brought Christ forth. The woman was Old Covenant Israel, of whom Christ was born. And the woman then became New Covenant

Israel at the last supper. And it is New Covenant Israel, otherwise known as the church, still called the woman, that now becomes the object of Satan's malevolence. So the woman of verses 13 to 17 is the New Covenant Israel, the church of the Living God.

Now to illustrate what verse 13 is talking about, I want us to turn to Acts chapter 9 for a moment. We're going to be looking at verses 1 to 5. Here we see the malevolence, the hatred, the anger, the persecution of Satan against the woman, once he has been cast down to earth. And his instrument in persecuting the woman is this Saul of Tarsus. And you can just see Satan behind Saul.

“And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.” Here's what that looks like. Acts 9:1: “And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, ² and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. ³ And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:⁴ and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? ⁵ And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.”

So Satan attempts to strike at Christ by striking at His people. You know, someone may not be able to injure your head, but if they can stomp and crush your foot, that is ultimately an attack upon the head, is it not? And so what we see here is Satan has been cast to the earth, and he goes in a rage to attack the woman. How does he do so? He does it through human instruments—human instruments of threatenings and slaughter and persecution.

That brings us to our second major point. Turn back please if you will to Revelation chapter 12. Having seen the motive for Satan's persecution of believers—this irrational desire to destroy all he can before he meets his final destiny—notice secondly, the protection from Satan's persecution of believers. The protection from Satan's persecution of believers is found in verse 14. It says, “And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time,”—notice—“from the face of the serpent.”

Now just like a judge would make provision for the safety and security of his family against the criminals he condemned, and just like the head makes provision for the safety and the protection of the body against attacks, in the same way, Christ makes provision for the safety and the protection of His church. Christ looks after His church with a jealous concern for her wellbeing and protection, and Jesus looks after His church with a zealous effort to secure her wellbeing and her protection.

I want you to notice the visual symbolic imagery that is used to describe this protection. It says here that she is “given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place” of nourishment and protection. Now you recall that we when expounded chapter 12 and

verse 6, we saw this same kind of symbolic imagery used there. Verse 6 and verse 14 speak in exactly the same symbolic imagery, but verse 14 supplies additional details.

You recall that when Israel fled from Pharaoh, where did Israel find refuge from Pharaoh? Well, Israel found refuge from Pharaoh in the wilderness, right? Israel crossed the Red Sea, went into the wilderness, and there she found refuge from Pharaoh. The wilderness was a place of refuge from the dragon, Pharaoh. Remember in Ezekiel 29, verses 1 to 3, Pharaoh is called the dragon? So he is a picture of Satan, the dragon. And where did Israel find refuge from this dragon Pharaoh? In a physical wilderness, out in the desert. In the wilderness, God protected Israel and fed Israel, while Israel's adversary, Pharaoh the dragon, could not reach her there. In the wilderness, Israel was beyond Pharaoh's grasp, and Israel was safe from Pharaoh's assaults.

This is the imagery of verse 14, as well. Notice it says, "to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly"—where?—"into the wilderness, which is called her place, where she is nourished, . . . from the face of the serpent." Christ provides His church with a metaphorical wilderness in which to live, where she is safe from the assaults of Satan. And the church flees into this wilderness and there finds a place of refuge from the face of the dragon. In the wilderness God protects His people, and in the wilderness God provides for His church.

Now please understand, the wilderness spoken of here is not a specific place under the New Covenant. The wilderness that is spoken of here in verse 6 and also in verse 14 is any place and every place in the world where the people of God can find refuge from Satan's persecuting people and from Satan's persecuting governments. The people of God have always had places of refuge someplace in the world to which they can flee from Satan's agents of persecution. And God sees to it that they do. The wilderness that God provides for His people under the New Covenant may be as small as an individual home, or a forest, or a cave, where people can be shielded from Satan's persecuting agents. It may be something as large as an entire nation, where people find protection from Satan's persecuting agents.

Now I want to provide you with a couple of illustrations of what I am talking about. Turn please in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 2. We've already looked at chapter 2 in a previous study, when we looked at verses 1 to 6 of Revelation 12. In Matthew chapter 2, Christ is born, and Herod, Satan's agent of persecution, wants to destroy Him. But what does God provide as a place of refuge, what wilderness does God guide Mary and Joseph and Jesus into so that they are beyond the reach of the serpent?

Notice if you will Matthew 2, verse 13. It says, "And when they," that is, the wise men "were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. ¹⁴When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: ¹⁵and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son."

So the place of refuge that God provided for Mary and Joseph and Jesus, the wilderness into which they were able to flee away from the face of the serpent in this situation, was Egypt.

Now I want you to notice verses 19 to 23: “¹⁹ But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child’s life. ²¹ And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: ²³ and he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.” Now, the wilderness that God has provided for Jesus away from the face of the serpent is a city. It is now the city of Nazareth.

Now turn please in your Bibles to Acts chapter 8. Once again, we see Satan, the dragon, persecuting the people and God providing a wilderness for them to flee into. Acts chapter 8, verses 1 to 5:

“¹ And Saul was consenting unto his death,” that is to the death of Stephen, who was stoned in the previous chapter. “And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem.” Here is Satan, cast to the earth. Now he is persecuting the woman. “And they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.” So they flee, and they flee into places that are beyond the reach of Satan’s persecuting agents. That’s why we read in chapter 9 that Saul had to go clear up to Damascus to find them, because that was the place of refuge to which they had fled.

Verse 2: “And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. ³ As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.” Here it is: “⁴ Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. ⁵ Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.”

Whenever Satan has begun to persecute the church, the church always has provided by God, a wilderness to flee into, away from the face of that persecution. So the wilderness is not a specific place under the New Covenant. It is any place and every place in the world where the people of God can find refuge from Satan’s persecuting people, and from Satan’s persecuting governments.

Now turn back please to Revelation chapter 12. Our text in verse 14 says that the woman was given two wings of a great eagle to facilitate her flight into the place of refuge from the persecuting dragon. This symbolic imagery of having eagle’s wings given to facilitate escape is rooted in several Old Testament passages, and I want us to look at them together.

Turn please to Exodus chapter 19. Israel has left Egypt, Israel has proceeded through the wilderness, Israel has now come to Mount Sinai. Notice if you will Exodus 19, verses 1 to 4. It says: “¹In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt,”—they escaped from Satan, from pharaoh the dragon—“the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.” So there’s their place of protection.

“²For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount. ³And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;”—now here’s our verse—“⁴Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself.” So God is saying here that the way in which He protected Israel and provided for Israel and brought Israel safely to Mount Sinai is like being flown there on the wings of an eagle.

This same metaphor is repeated in Deuteronomy 32. Turn there please. Here Moses is recounting the same thing, but he uses more expansive language. Deuteronomy 32, verses 9 to 13: “⁹For the LORD’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his,” that is, God’s, “inheritance.” Imagine that. We are God’s inheritance. Verse 10: “He found him,” that is, Israel, “in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.” Protected him like you would protect the pupil of your eyeball.

Now here’s our verse: “¹¹As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them,” that is, the young eagles, and “beareth them on her wings.” As the eagle flies with the young on her back, “¹²So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. ¹³He made him,” that is, Israel, “ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock.” And he goes on and describes the blessings that occurred in the wilderness when God was, as it were, a giant eagle and bearing Israel on His back and carrying them to the Promised Land.

Then there’s that famous passage in Isaiah chapter 40. Turn there please. Isaiah chapter 40, verses 28 to 31: “²⁸Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. ²⁹He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. ³⁰Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: ³¹But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength;”—here it is—“they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”

Turn back please now to Revelation chapter 12. Clearly, the eagle’s wings that are spoken of in Revelation 12 and verse 14 are a metaphor, a symbol for God’s help and for God’s protection and for God’s power. God will protect and empower and guide His church to places of safety from Satan’s persecuting people by His providences and by His provision. The church will be

supernaturally led out of places of danger, and led into places of safety in various places around the world.

You think of America. It was a place of refuge from the persecution of believers in England, in Scotland, and elsewhere. So they came across on the Mayflower to find, what? A place of refuge. And God bore them on eagles' wings, enabled them to establish a colony. And for centuries, America was a place of refuge, the wilderness into which God transported His people, for them to be able to find a place of protection from the face of the serpent.

Well sad to say, the serpent has now landed in America, and now our own government has become the serpent that is beginning to turn on us and beginning to persecute us. And we may have to flee here, and we may have to flee there, in order to find protection from the face of the serpent. But mark it down—God will always provide a place for His people to flee to. And that's the promise of verse 14.

Now the question is, How long will this supernatural enablement to find protection from Satan and his people go on? Well it will go on, it says in verse 14, “for a time, and times, and half a time”; the symbolic three and a half years, otherwise known as forty two months, otherwise known as twelve hundred and sixty days—this symbolic time period that represents the entire period between the first and the second comings of Christ, as we have demonstrated in our previous messages.

So then, while Satan will persecute the church all during the time from his being cast out of heaven at the ascension of Christ, clear until the second coming of Christ, when he is cast into the lake of fire, nevertheless, Christ will supernaturally deliver the church out of his hand, just like He supernaturally delivered Israel out of Pharaoh's hand. Christ will protect His church, Christ will nourish His church, Christ will feed His church, all throughout this age, and deliver her from Satan's efforts to destroy her. That's the promise of protection from Satan's persecution of believers in verse 14.

That leads us then to our third major point this morning. Having seen the motive for Satan's persecution of believers in verse 13, having seen the protection from Satan's persecution of believers in verse 14, notice thirdly the method of Satan's persecution of believers in verses 15 to 16. Notice verse 15: “And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood ¹⁶ And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.”

Here in verses 15 and 16, we are told in symbolic language the method that Satan uses to try to persecute the church. The church is protected by Christ, as we saw in verse 14, from physical assaults by providing them with a place to flee away *from* those physical assaults. But this does not mean that Satan does not still attempt to attack the church. Satan, it says in verse 15, sends out a flood of assaults toward the people of God.

Now what is this “flood” of assaults that Satan launches out against the people of God to overwhelm them? The idea here is like a tidal wave, right? People are on the shore, and the ocean just spews forth this giant volume of water that is designed to just go inland and swallow them up. That’s the picture.

I want you to turn please to Psalm 144, and we’ll see what this flood is. Now frequently, the metaphor of a flood is used of an attacking army in the Old Testament. The Assyrians come in like a flood to overwhelm the land of Israel, right? That metaphor is frequently spoken of in the Scriptures. But I think that there’s another way to understand this flood. Having seen that Jesus protects His church from the flood of physical persecution in verse 14, this flood of verse 15 seems to be something different and something in addition to that physical persecution, and I think Psalm 144 sheds light on what this flood of Revelation 12:15 is referring to.

Notice Psalm 144, verses 7 and 8. The Psalmist is praying to God and he says, ⁷Send thine hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children;”—now here it is—⁸Whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.” So what David is saying here is, These great waters - this flood of lies from the enemy, is being thrust upon me. It’s overwhelming me. Father, deliver me from this flood of falsehood.

Now turn back please to Revelation chapter 12. What we see, then, in verse 15 is that Satan tries to overwhelm and sink the church beneath a flood of lies. Humanistic philosophies, false religions, political delusions, economic enticements, pseudoscientific theories like evolution, and a thousand other lies are thrown at the church by Satan.

Satan tells the church that the Bible has errors, that men are fundamentally good, that obtaining health and wealth and happiness are the chief goals of Christianity, that social action is the mission of the church. He tells them that church attendance is dispensable, the Fourth Commandment is obsolete, man is sovereign, and morality is relative.

This flood of lies is designed to carry away the church from her faith and from her mission and from her God. This flood is like a river of death that stands in contrast to the river of life that proceeds out of the throne of God. This is Satan’s counterfeit river. If Satan cannot destroy the church because she’s protected, verse 14, then his goal is to cripple the church with compromise and corruption so that it becomes weak and ineffective in its witness and its worship, verse 15.

The church in every generation has been plagued by this flood of lies from Satan. But once again, Christ does not leave His church defenseless. He anticipated this evil work on the part of Satan, and even before He left this earth, He prayed for our protection from this flood of lies. You remember John chapter 17, Jesus’ high priestly prayer—what does He pray for? He prays for the protection of the woman, His bride, the church.

In John chapter 17, in verse 11, Jesus says to the Father, “And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee.” So He’s looking forward to the time after the ascension, when Satan is cast down to the earth and he begins this fierce persecution and this flood of lies. And Jesus says, “Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me.” Protect them, Father. Protect their unity, that they may be one, even as we are. He says, “¹² While I was them in the world, I kept them in thy name.” I preserved them. “Those that thou gavest me, I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.”

How many disciples were killed when Jesus was captured? None. Remember He said, Take me, let these go. He protected them. Verse 13: “And now come I to thee;” speaking of His ascension, “and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” I’m going to be gone, but I want them to be happy.

Verse 14: “I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” When Jesus thought—You know, I’m going away. I need to leave something to sustain my church, I need to feed them with manna—what did He leave them with? His word. The Bible.

And now here’s our verse, verse 15: “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil [one].” Now in the King James, is just says, “Keep them from the evil,” period. Evil is an adjective and it modifies a noun. Here the noun’s implied, not directly stated. In the Greek it’s what we call the substantive use of the adjective. All other translations, the New King James and others, supply the noun—“evil one,” that is, Satan. He says, Lord, I pray not that you should take them out of the world, like you took me out, He says, But I want you to protect them from the Evil One—from Satan. And what is the protection? Let’s keep reading. “¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” Here’s the protection: “¹⁷ Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” Truth is the protection against the flood of lies that the Evil One spews forth.

Turn back please to Revelation 12. We read in verse 16, “And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed *up* the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.” The metaphor is clear. Actual, literal, physical floods that we experience don’t last forever, do they, because the ground absorbs the flood waters and they disappear, downward into the ground, and the flood goes away, doesn’t it? In the same way, Satan’s lies do not stand for very long in the church before God raises up a man to declare the truth, and thereby swallow up the lie that Satan has propagated.

By way of illustration, historically, God raised up Martin Luther and the Reformers in the Reformation to swallow up the lies of Romanism with the truth of Biblical teaching on justification by faith alone, and the authority of the Scriptures alone. Faith alone, Christ alone, Scripture alone, the Glory of God alone, Grace alone. So these were the truths that swallowed up the lies that had been flooding Christendom for a long time.

Cults come along, but God raises up theologians and scholars to expose and defuse their false teachings. False humanistic philosophies come along, and God raises up apologetic ministries that rebut and refute the deceptions of humanism. The point is, God always raises up the means to defeat and dissipate the lies of Satan that flood into the world in every generation.

In Isaiah 59 and verse 19, it says, “When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.” And the enemy came in like a flood in the form of Roman Catholicism, and the Spirit of the Lord raised up a standard of Martin Luther and the Reformers against him, and they swallowed up his lies, and the church was protected.

And so it has been in every generation. Just as Aaron’s rod swallowed up the rods of Pharaoh’s magicians, so the truth of God’s word will swallow up the lies propagated by Satan’s people. And just as the earth literally opened up and swallowed Korah and Dathan and Abiram when they sought to corrupt the church of the Old Testament, so the lake of fire will swallow up Satan and his servants in the day of judgment for all the corruption they sought to bring upon the church. Metaphorically and literally, the earth opens up to swallow this flood of lies and those who propagate them, and thereby the church is protected.

The point is simply this: whatever Satan throws at the church to overwhelm it, God provides a means to subdue it, to defuse it, and to destroy it of its strength and its power. And the church is protected from the lies, and the church is sanctified by the truth, and the church continues to go on. Satan is defeated, the flood of his lies is dissipated, the church continues to maintain the truth, century after century after century. It continues to go forward and triumph.

Neither the persecutions directed at the body nor the flood of lies directed at the mind are able to destroy the church. Christ protects her by providing her with a place of refuge physically from the persecutors, and Christ protects her spiritually by providing her with the means to turn back the flood of lies that would corrupt her theology and her practice.

And that brings us to our fourth and final point. Having seen the motive for Satan’s persecution of believers in verse 13, having seen the protection from Satan’s persecution of believers in verse 14, having seen the method of Satan’s persecution of believers in verses 15 and 16, notice fourthly, the ongoing nature of Satan’s persecution of believers in verse 17. Notice: “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

The dragon is enraged at the woman, that is, the church, because his efforts to destroy it either by persecution or by deception have failed. He failed in the first generation, the generation in which John was writing Revelation in 95 AD, but Satan does not give up the effort. If he cannot destroy the church in one generation, he will try to do so in the next generation; if he cannot ruin the church in one century, he will attempt to do so in the following century.

Each generation of believers begets the next generation of believers, who are here called the “seed” or the “offspring” of the woman. And how are the offspring of the woman identified? What marks their true paternity? Is it infant baptism? Are successive generations of the church to be identified and defined as believers by having been baptized as infants? Absolutely not. The true offspring of the true church are identified by their conduct, not by their genetics; by their character, not by rituals they have gone through, like infant baptism.

Notice in verse 17, as each new generation of the church is born through regeneration in the new birth, they are marked by two characteristics. First of all, they are marked by the fact that they keep the commandments of God. You can baptize babies all day long, but if they don’t keep the commandments of God, they’re not the seed of the woman.

In Matthew chapter 28, verses 19 and 20, Jesus says, Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, and baptize *them*, that is, baptize the disciples, and teach *them* to, what? Observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And how do you know someone is a disciple? Because they keep all things, whatever Jesus has commanded of them. Now they don’t keep them perfectly, but they keep them comprehensively and they keep them as the dominating characteristic of their life, all the days of their life. These are the overcomers.

So this is the first characteristic of the children of the church—they keep the commandments of God. The second is that they have the testimony of Jesus Christ; that is, they publicly confess their faith in Christ as their Lord and Savior before the world. They’re not closet Christians. We read in the gospels that many believed on Him, but out of the fear of the Pharisees, they did not confess Him, lest they be put out of the synagogue. What kind of believers are those? False believers.

If you are going to be understood to be a true member of the church of Jesus Christ, you must publicly, before men, declare yourself to be a Christian, to be one who is trusting in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, one who preaches the gospel, at whatever capacity you possess, in whatever opportunities God provides. It may be something as simple as a mother teaching her children to fear God, keep His commandments, repent of their sins, and seek Christ; or it may be something as great as a street preacher who has filled stadiums with people; and everything in-between. But somehow, some way, in some degree, you’ve got to stand up on your hind legs before a hostile world and say to them, “I am a Christian. I am trusting in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, and my life is sold out to Him, and yours needs to be as well.” That’s what the testimony of Jesus Christ looks like.

Those who have the testimony of Jesus Christ publicly confess their faith in Christ as their Lord and Savior before the world. They publicly testify that Jesus Christ has saved them from their sins. And you see, this is how the church is renewed on the earth, century after century. As people follow the teachings of Jesus, and proclaim the gospel of Jesus, the next generation is born to Jesus via the new birth. They’re born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible

seed by the word of God that lives and abides forever. And as you bear testimony to that word, the next generation is born.

So the church is constantly renewed, the church is constantly persecuted, and the church is constantly protected from the murderous assaults of Satan and from the flood of lies spewed forth by Satan. Every generation has to fight this war, and every generation will win this war. The church has been winning the war against Satan for 2,000 years, and do you think this generation's going to lose it? We're not. We're still triumphing in and through Christ.

And so as the church is renewed on the earth century after century through being born from above by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, century after century Satan sends out his people to persecute them and his lies to deceive them. And century after century, Christ provides protection for His people, and He provides an exposure and a repudiation of those lies, and by that means, Christ sustains His church and leads them into final triumph. So what you're going through today is what the church has been going through for the last 2,000 years, and will continue to go through until Jesus returns.

Now we said when we introduced this book that this book was a manual of spiritual warfare. And you can see that when we properly understand what these symbolic metaphors are conveying to us that it tells us exactly what we can expect. You know, there may come a day when you have to physically get up and go somewhere else to escape being killed by Satan's persecutors. The church has always done that. The church will always have to do that. And Christ will always provide a place for them to go.

And you know, you are just stunned by the lies that have come into the church and how the churches have imbibed them. But what's stunning to me is how God always raises up men, extraordinary men, in every generation to expose those lies and rebut those lies and to confirm the church in her faith. Thank God for the giants that God raises up to swallow up the lies of the Evil One and to keep sanctifying the church through the truth.

Well, let's be about begetting the next generation so that they too can triumph over the Evil One, who is already defeated, who tries, but every time, who loses. Shall we pray together.

Father, thank you for this description of the nature of the battlefield on which we function. Father, we know we have a horrible adversary, but we also know that we have a greater advocate and protector. And Father, I just pray that you would help us to enjoy protection from his persecuting agents and that you would help us to not be overwhelmed by his flood of lies that bombard us every day, through every avenue of his servants as they fill the airwaves and the Internet and social gatherings and educational institutions with his lies. O Father, raise up champions to swallow up those lies and to provide the church with protection and defense from them. Thank you, Father, the church has never fallen before the physical persecutions, or the intellectual deceptions, and it never shall. Father, protect us in our generation and help us to be

about the work of keeping the commandments of God and bearing testimony of Jesus Christ. We ask it in His name. Amen.