

Where Is The Beast? (Part Three)

The Woman of Revelation 12

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We're going to begin this sermon by turning to Matthew 24:36.

Matthew 24:36 But of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

There is something that Richard mentioned at the end of his sermon that he titled "Shock and Awe" that I want to pick up on as we begin this sermon. He emphasized very strongly that Jesus Christ said that we would not know the day nor the hour of His return, because that was completely in the Father's hand. In plain words, the specific date of His return is simply not going to be known to us. And that means *any* day, including the Feast of Trumpets, which almost everybody uses as their end-point of his or her calculation as to when Christ will return. So any date that anybody chooses is going to be, in plain words, a speculation.

I say this because many, many people have attempted to determine when Christ is going to return *anyway*. At the very least I feel that this shows a strong measure of skepticism, and perhaps for some it might even be outright disbelief by those who are doing the searching. It's almost as if Jesus is not taken seriously, but He was serious about what He said.

I want you to notice in another place in the book of Acts where Jesus said something similar, but He put a bit of a twist on it.

Acts 1:6-7 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in his own power [or authority].

The apostles were curious and excited about this kind of thing, just as we are today, and their question was not even specifically about a certain day, because they were hopeful that the time had already arrived. Now Christ was every bit as general in His answer as they were with their question. Again though, they are very clearly told they aren't going to know. This statement coordinates with what Jesus said in the Olivet Prophecy, but He expands the thought from day and hour to *time* and *season* . That is even more general. He told the apostles they aren't even going to know the time or the season.

If you care to look up the word *time* , you will find it means *the duration of a period of time* . An hour would be a very short duration. A day would be a bit longer, but the implication from the word "times" is of a period much more expansive than that.

The word "season" means a length of time characterized by certain events, like the Christmas Season. There are certain events that take place during that period of time. Even in our culture, the Christmas Season seems to extend now from Thanksgiving, (and even before Thanksgiving in some cases), all the way into January a week or so. In that period of time you're in the Christmas Season. So even the common usage here in the United States, a season would be, let's say, somewhere between two and three months.

Jesus' response to them was more general than the day nor the hour. He also said something very pointed there. He said, "It's not for you to know." What He was doing here was counseling them to avoid probing into these things. He was in a sense saying, *"It's a waste of time. You have more important things to do than to be thinking about this."* In short, the disciples were not even to know the general period of time of the establishment of God's kingdom.

Let's take this a little bit further. We're going to go back into the writings of Paul, in I Thessalonians 5:2.

I Thessalonians 5:2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

"The day of the Lord" can be a lot longer period of time than the specific day or hour, or even season of Christ's return.

Does anybody know when the thief is going to come? That's the point of the illustration that is used here. The thief comes at a time when the householder does not expect. We might just be able to throw this out except for one thing: this is written to Christians. *The day of the Lord is going to come as a thief in the night.*

All this adds up to something that might be a bit disconcerting, and that is He is saying that we are only going to know *general conditions* regarding the time of His return. The specifics are going to be touch and go.

I think we would all agree that over the years some have been making a determined effort to know each and every prophecy's precise fulfillment. It seems as though our curiosity demands that we know all of the who's, what's, when's, why's and where's, but the whole thrust of the instruction is to be ready regardless of when His return is. Doing "the work" in one's life is far more important than knowing the specifics of His return.

I can understand the desire for looking into these things. I will have to say personally it's not something that has ever really appealed very strongly to me, but at the same time I want you to understand my approach, and that is, very basically and clearly, I look upon *everybody's* end-time concept, including Herbert Armstrong's, and my own, as being theory. I'll tell you why.

Just from the standpoint of recent church history, I sometimes wonder whether we have gotten anything regarding prophecy right. I know that is somewhat of an exaggeration, but neither is it totally wrong. Even though the Bible shows it is not wrong to attempt to decipher prophecy, it also shows, both in the Bible and in the experience of the church over the last 35-40 years, that the Bible in regard to prophecy is not an open book. Even though we are coming along later than the apostles, and therefore closer to the return of Jesus Christ, and we will eventually know more precisely than they did then, what we know is still going to have to be revealed.

Daniel 12:4 But you, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

I think it's good for us to understand that this statement, especially that last one—"and knowledge shall be increased"—can have a broad application. It can, but at the same time it is a direct statement in regard to the context in which it fits, and it is coming at the end of the longest single prophecy in the Bible, which encompasses all of Daniel 11. Let's go back to Daniel 10, because this is where this particular context begins.

Daniel 10:1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long [meaning the prophecy was going to unfold over a long period of time]: and he [Daniel] understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision.

The wording is somewhat confusing here in this actually brief introduction to the prophecy, but what it means is that Daniel understood only *part* of a very long prophecy. All of chapter 10 is devoted to the introduction, preparing Daniel to receive the prophecy that begins in chapter 11.

Now here is what happens: The prophecy is given, but it is not explained. This is God's pattern. He gives prophecies. *Rarely* does He ever explain them, and it helps us to understand an application of what Paul said in I Corinthians 13, "that we look through a glass darkly." We don't know. We don't see everything clearly.

Paul also said in that verse—that "we know in part." That's the way Daniel was here. He understood a small portion of a very long prophecy in terms of the number of words that were in it, and also long in terms of time for its fulfillment to come to pass.

The reference to "*knowledge shall be increased*" is a direct reference to the prophecy itself. "Knowledge of the prophecy shall be increased." Now many would seek to understand, so in verse 8 it says:

Daniel 12:8-10 And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go your way Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly; [In other words, the world is going to keep right on going.] and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand, ...[but that's not until the end].

Many would think to look into it, but the message, brethren, has to be revealed. The angel did not reveal it to Daniel, and the angel has not yet revealed it to anybody. He does say that it will be given to the *wise*, and the *wise* is described elsewhere in the Bible as "those who keep the commandments of God."

Deuteronomy 29:29 The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

There are things God, for His purposes, chooses to keep to Himself. God reveals a great deal of general knowledge about Himself in nature. These things are open to anybody, whether they are in Russia, or in Japan, or in the United States. People can look at nature and they can come to a conclusion that it took an awesome and great power—in terms of being able to bring things to pass, in terms of wisdom, in terms of love—to make this creation. It is awesome to behold, and so people will say there is a God who has made all of these things, and so a revelation of God in terms of nature is not really all that secret.

Now there is more specific revelation of God in His word, in the Scripture, but this revelation in the Scripture is far more closed than the revelation in nature. We find in places like I Corinthians 2 that these things must be revealed. The secret things belong to God, and those things that are revealed

belong to *us* —whether it comes from nature, or whether it comes from God directly in the revelation of His word.

There is a clear example of how God reveals, and this is in the book of Micah. This is just one example, and it is interesting how He waited until virtually the last moment to do the revelation.

Micah 5:2 But you, Bethlehem Ephratah, though you be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall he come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Now of whom is He prophesying? He's prophesying of the Christ. He's prophesying of the birthplace of the Messiah. He made it very clear that the birthplace of the Messiah was going to be in Bethlehem of Judea, the place of David's birth as well. But when did He reveal the exact precise location of where one could find Him? Not until He had an angel in the star lead the Magi right to the house where the Messiah was at the time they arrived there. You see how it came at the last moment. Do you think His second coming might be similar to that?

We all know that He's coming. We all know that He's going to circle the earth when He does come, that He's coming with a great horde of angels, but when is the precise time that God will reveal it? It almost looks like it's going to be "Bang!" right at the end.

There are enough writings from Jewish history for us to understand that they knew from the prophecy in Daniel that they were in the ballpark in terms of time, and so they saw conditions, but they didn't see a precise sign until the angel lit up the sky. I think that sets a pattern. God keeps that secret to Himself until it is the right time within His purpose for Him to reveal specifics.

Now much of what He chooses to keep to Himself is the specific reason why He doesn't intervene, let's say, more quickly to provide what we think we need in the test of our faith in the midst of a long trial. We go through things, and we don't know the specific reasons why. We know generality. We know that our faith is being tested, but it may be a good while before the specific

reason for the trial is made known to us. In all that while He is testing our faith to see whether or not we're really going to trust Him from beginning to end.

You know that He has to push us to the edge of the envelope. He can't afford to make any mistakes in regard to giving us eternal life if we can't be trusted as well to trust Him. That might be something each of us goes through personally, but in terms of this sermon, one of the things He chooses to keep to Himself is specifics of future events.

The general answer as to why is given right there in Deuteronomy 29:29, and that is His mention of the law. It is just like what Jesus said to His apostles in Acts 1. There are more important things for us to know. He said, "*I want you to pay attention to My word [law].*" That's been given to us. It's been revealed to us, and that's what we're to pay attention to, and when the time comes for prophecy to be revealed, He will do so. Now we have a general promise in Amos 3:7.

Amos 3:7 Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing but he reveals his secret unto his servants the prophets.

In putting these scriptures together—Deuteronomy 29:29 and Amos 3:7, together with an example like we saw in Daniel 12—He is clearly telling us that He promises to reveal the understanding of prophecy on a "need-to-know" basis. When we need to know, He will tell us. That's His promise. So until that time arrives, precise understanding is going to be impossible. Therefore, anyone's interpretation of prophecy has to be understood as theory until the evidence arises that it is a true interpretation.

I twice heard Herbert Armstrong with my own ears strongly proclaim, "I am not a prophet!" He went on to say that there are no New Testament prophets in the classic Old Testament sense of one who had direct communication from God for telling the future.

If any of you have any old *Tomorrow's World* magazines in your library, you can look this up in the June 1972 issue: "Emphatically, I am not a prophet in the sense of one to whom God speaks directly revealing personally a future event to happen, or new truth, or new or special instruction from God

separate from, and apart from what is contained in the Bible, and I have never claimed to be." He was not a prophet.

Throughout Herbert Armstrong's ministry as a broadcaster (whether he was interpreting and speculating), like us, his position left him free to make predictions, but those predictions are not infallible. They are educated guesses, speculations based upon scripture and the latest news events, but they occasionally need updating.

Mr. Armstrong never received information in vision, dreams, or in a face-to-face meeting with God. If you would care to go back and look at his writings (concerning prophetic issues), they are frequently peppered with words like *could*, *might*, and *may*. "*This **might** happen.*" "*Christ **may** be on earth in ten or fifteen years.*" Those are things we might have overlooked before.

I want you to contrast that with the Bible's prophecies which use words like *shall*, *will*, *most certainly*, *surely* and *truly, truly*. Herbert Armstrong's prophecies were clearly speculations based on what he then perceived from the news of the time. I want you to understand that this in no way diminishes my respect for him as an apostle, because he had to speculate within the same constraints as everybody else. He frequently made changes in what he anticipated would be happening.

I was listening to him since 1959, and I heard him update things, and I have seen it in his writings. During the Second World War, his writings were saying that Armageddon was just a couple of years ahead. When 1945 came and went, he had to update that, and so he changed it, because he knew then that it was not going to occur. I believe that God used him to raise up the end-time church, and he was not lying to us. He gave us his best shot regarding his understanding at the time.

My Bible has this verse in red:

Revelation 3:11 Behold, I come *quickly* .

When was this prophecy uttered? The best guess is somewhere about 95 AD to 97 AD—somewhere in that general area. Christ said, "I come quickly!"

Now what if you heard Him in 95 AD say that? You would have thought, "Boy oh boy! His feet are going to be on the earth any day now!" But you see, the book of Revelation applies to the *end time*, and within the context of the book of Revelation the end-time is that period of time *immediately* before the return of Jesus Christ. Then those words are a lot truer than they would be in 95 AD. They are imminent.

But it's been 1900 years since Jesus said that. Was Jesus lying? No, because the intention for the book is for that period of time right before the end; maybe in those few decades right before the end. In that case we are within the parameter of a season in which certain events are taking place. Conditions are beginning to look like it is indeed *the end time*. You can do the same thing with a prophecy of Paul or Peter, and you will notice their prophecies are very general, especially in regard to the time that things would occur.

Here is another item that has to do with prophetic things, and it's come to my attention since I've been looking at this subject a lot more carefully than I ever have before. And that is, the proclivity of people to use prophetic scriptures in what I would have to characterize as "a loose manner." To those doing this, every reference to things like Israel, Judah, Zion, daughters of Zion, in every Old Testament prophecy, automatically becomes an *end time* prophecy of the *church* as well. On what authority do they do this?

There are some parallels between the church and ancient Israel, and the church and some of these other things. There is no doubt about that, but my emphasis here is on *every time*? In the same manner, certain symbols are often held by these people to indicate the same real entity. Here again my key word is the word *always*. But the Bible itself is not always consistent in this regard.

I gave a sermonette in Charlotte ["Symbolism, Types, and Prophecies"], and then I think I also gave it in Denver a month or so ago, showing that the term "**Zion**" (which some almost automatically interpret to mean "**church**") is actually used by God seven different ways in the Bible. In looking things up along this line I stumbled across what Bullinger said about the word "spirit." We use the word "spirit" often, and it appears in the Bible often. Bullinger

said that the word "spirit" is used eight different ways in the scriptures. It has eight shades of meaning in which it is used, and you have to understand that word within its context, or you'll come up with a wrong understanding of the context.

One of the more interesting is what I feel is the misuse of the "*woman*" symbol in the Bible. Again, some will automatically think "*church* ." However, in the Bible, in context, "*woman*" **overwhelmingly**, figuratively indicates a physical city, or a nation; not a church. This is not to say that a church can never be a true interpretation, but only to say that we had better be *careful* that the context will allow that interpretation; otherwise, we come to a wrong conclusion.

In my first two messages on this subject, I laid a foundation showing you that as conditions are today, events are not producing a Europe that has any resemblance to the frightening, powerful Beast that Revelation 13 reveals. This is not to say that things won't change, only that the best information available at this time shows us that, at best, things are moving very slowly. Europe is actually in turmoil politically, and thus is very divided. They are flat on their back economically, and just within this past month took their first step toward having a common military.

How long has the EU been in existence? Since 1957. Even with what they're starting with, ...(great things grow from little things)... their first stab at it is going to consist of a force of two thousand personnel and grow to sixty thousand. Ever wonder why they stopped at sixty thousand? That's all they can afford. Their economy is so bad. Germany's air force is so pitifully small that recently, when they were required to send a small force of personnel to a peace-keeping commitment they volunteered for in Macedonia, they had to lease airplanes from Ukraine in order to get their people there.

In late April, Germany, France, Belgium, and Luxembourg held a summit in an attempt to create a military alliance. I have a report from the BBC News stating that even before it began, the Italians objected, saying, "Any attempt to forge closer military ties would be viewed by Italy with a very critical eye." A couple of days following that jibe, Prime Minister Tony Blair castigated those four nations for the same thing the Italians did, saying,

"Such a move is destructive to NATO." Of the remaining twenty-two nations that are either now, or will be, part of the European Union, only one has reacted favorably to the four's proposal.

The European nations are, as a whole, envious and at the same time resentful of America. But in fact, at this point in time, they are so dependent on America economically and militarily, that all they can do is make a lot of bluster. They cannot back away from us. Germany is the economic engine of Europe, but things are not going well economically for Germany, or for that matter all the European Union.

Here is a brief report dated April 28, 2003 on the German economy from *Fasnet*, a German web site operated by the Seimen's Financial Services:

German tax revenues fell significantly in the first quarter of 2003 aggravating the fiscal crisis at the state and municipal levels in particular. This latest symptom of the country's economic woes virtually ensured that Germany will exceed the Euro zone's deficit limit of 3% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) again this year. Although official figures will not be released until Friday, officials admitted privately that tax collections in the January to March period were 2.9% below the already low level recorded in the first quarter of 2002. Germany thus pulled down the European Union average substantially, and across the EU tax revenues fell by eight tenths of one percent in the first quarter.

In the world, the economy is power. It pays for a powerful military, and the EU is not yet showing signs that it is a union of power. In those previous sermons I also showed that through history, that as the metal changed in Nebuchadnezzar's dream prophecy in Daniel 2, the geographical location of the world-dominating power also changed. Kind of stick that in a niche in your mind : ***geographical location.***

Neither is Israel geographically located where it was anciently, thus showing that even biblically, power centers move. Therefore, we should not be surprised if the final Beast power is not actually wholly located within the geographical boundaries of ancient Rome. We cannot assume that God looks at national boundaries as we do.

I also showed that Babylon (once a city and a nation, but no longer existing as such) became a biblical code word or name for the worldwide anti-God system. The Roman Empire is just one world-dominating empire within that system, and that the Semitic people, including the Israelites, lived strongly influenced by the Roman system for over two thousand years. Thus, when they kept emigrating into the lands that God had set aside for them, they took the Roman Empire with them, mixed together with their own Israelitish history, including the Bible.

We're going to start considering a question. Where is Israel in the book of Revelation?

The nation of Israel is the backdrop upon which virtually the entire Bible, beginning in Genesis 12, unfolds. It is at the forefront of virtually all biblical prophecy, and yet the name "Israel" appears only three inconsequential times in the book of Revelation; once each in chapter 2, in chapter 7, and in chapter 21. Can God ignore Israel in the most important book in the entire Bible in regard to the end time? Why isn't it named?

Israel collectively is the most powerful nation on the face of the earth. The United States and Britain just *blew* Europe and the United Nations aside. They didn't care what the UN thought when it came right down to it. "Do you want to challenge us? Challenge us!" Poof! And they went and did their thing. That's power! That's respect that those other nations are showing the Josephites.

Can God ignore Israel in the book of Revelation, when it's not even named, except three times? Well, let's begin to think about this.

Genesis 12:1-3 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you: And ***I will make of you a great nation*** , and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless you, and curse him that curses you: and in you shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Remember, ..."I will make of you a *great* nation."

Genesis 13:14-16 And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now your eyes, and look from the place where you are northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed forever. And I will make your seed as the *dust* of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall your seed also be numbered.

"All the families of the earth shall be blessed," and "I will make your seed as the dust of the earth."

Genesis 17:5-6 Neither shall your name anymore be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham: for a father of *many* nations have I made you. And I will make you exceeding fruitful, and I will make *nations* of you, and *kings* shall come out of you.

Nations and kings. *Many* nations and kings.

Genesis 22:17 That in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the *stars* of the heaven, and as the *sand* which is upon the sea shore; and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.

He adds to the dust—we have sand, stars which are considered to be countless. We see here strength, power, greatness in number. And not only that, those who come from Abraham are going to sit in strategic locations like doors and gates, letting people in and out.

This is spoken by Isaac to Jacob:

Genesis 27:27-29 And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed: Therefore God give you of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: Let people serve

you, and nations bow down to you: be lord over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you: cursed be every one that curses you, and blessed be he that blesses you.

"Dew of heaven" indicates rain in due season in the right amount. "Fatness of the earth" indicates rich soil, as well as mineral wealth.

Genesis 28:14 And your seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in you and in your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

That promise indicates that the nations that come from Abraham are going to spread over the whole earth. These promises either imply, or they clearly state large populations, large land surfaces, good geographical locations, good weather patterns, rich soil, mineral wealth, and enormous numbers of people. Do not these promises indicate that Israel is to become a major force in the world?

In the prophecies of the Old Testament pertaining to the end-time and beyond, Israel is almost always the subject of those prophecies, and other nations, regardless of how populace and powerful they are, are mentioned only as they come in contact with Israel. Here's Revelation, a book devoted almost exclusively to the end, yet evidence of Israel's existence is very sparse and vague. But at the time of the end, as it has approached, what has God done? He has revealed to His church where Israel is. The rest of the world doesn't give a hoot, but to the church it means something. It has been revealed so that we can make a proper use of this truth.

Indeed brethren, Israel is large, and it is important. Its combined population is somewhere around 500 million people. I should interject something here. The promises made to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob are given in the sense of the entire completion of God's purpose, when all of mankind will be included within the sons of Abraham—all converted, all part of the family of God as well. We are in an important juncture of that, but in this time period—from the time Genesis 12 took place up until now, and in all of that history—God has been following through on all of His prophecies and promises regarding this.

We have reached a critical point at the time of the end when He has revealed where Israel is right now, and we know that Israel's combined population—the United States, Britain, Norway, Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands, France, Belgium, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, and so forth—is over 500 million people. Its combined economic, military, educational, religious, political and geographic influence is *unrivaled* in the world. It is so lopsided in almost any area you look at. Do you know that 70% of the world's fresh water is in Israel, and most of that 70% is in the United States.

God has blessed the Israelitish people to such an extent there has never been a power on earth that can even begin to rival them. Make any kind of comparison you want, whether it be the Roman Empire, or China at its greatest, despite those hundreds of millions of people that are in China, nobody can hold a candle to Israel. That is why the United States and Britain just blew Europe off. There is nothing that they could do about it except yell at us. So does God just write Israel off in the most significant end-time book of all? I think not. It's there, but it is prophetically hidden.

Revelation 12:1 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.

I believe that Herbert Armstrong correctly identified the woman as symbolizing the nation of Israel. Every commentary that I have ever looked into, they too identified Israel as being revealed here in Revelation 12:1. Let's go back to Genesis 37 where some of the same symbolism is used. In this case it appears in the dream or the vision of Joseph.

Genesis 37:6-10 And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: For behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright: and behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. And his brethren said to him, Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and behold, the sun and the moon and the

eleven stars made obeisance to me. [There we have it: sun, moon, and eleven stars.] And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to you to the earth?

Jacob clearly understood that he was the sun, his wife was the moon, and his twelve children were the stars. There's Israel. There is the root of Israel. Back in Revelation, those symbols are used for two reasons. One is to signify the root of this woman that is being portrayed here, that it is Israelitish: sun, moon, stars—Jacob, Rachel, and the twelve sons. But the sun, moon, and stars also have a secondary meaning here, and that is to give indication of glory. We are looking at a *glorious* woman here—one that can be associated with the glorious things in the heaven—the sun, moon, and stars.

Revelation 12:2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

Before we go any further, I want you to mark this thing in your mind, in your memory about the *glory*, because as God is looking at Israel at this time—that is, in the prophetic sense, the time within the prophecies—Israel is *glorious*. Israel's beginning, if I can put it that way, is glorious—glorious as the heavenly bodies.

The woman was pregnant. She was with child, and it was just about the time for the birth to take place. In verse 3 we have another wonder appearing in heaven—the great red dragon.

Revelation 12:4-5 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. 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.

It's very clear that Israel (the woman) gave birth to the Messiah (Jesus Christ) because He is the One who is described here who is to rule all nations

with a rod of iron. He was put to death, but then He ascended to heaven. It is very clear that the woman is Israel, the child is Christ, and we all know who the dragon is.

Revelation 12:6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and three-score days.

Mark this, and mark it well. The woman who fled into the wilderness is not the church. It is the *nation*. Nothing has changed in the prophecy. The woman who gave birth to the child fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared of God. And then we have this interlude beginning in verse 7 about Michael fighting against the dragon and his angels. They prevailed not, and the serpent (the Devil and Satan) was cast down. In verse 10 it defines him a little bit more. Verse 11 describes the people overcoming him.

Revelation 12:12-13 Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you 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 knows that he has but a short time. *And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.*

Verse 13 is very important. This is the same woman who was pictured in verse 1, the same woman who was pictured in verse 2, and the same woman who was pictured in verse 5 as fleeing. Nothing has changed. The woman is the subject. The woman is not the church. The woman is the nation of *Israel* who gave birth to the man child.

Revelation 12:14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly unto the wilderness, into her place where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

Nothing has changed. The woman who was the subject of verse 13, "to her was given two wings of a great eagle that *she* might fly into the wilderness, into her place." This is not the church being described. It is the nation of *Israel* being described.

Revelation 12:15-17 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, [the *same* woman] that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman [who is still the same woman of verse 1, the same woman of verse 13 who gave birth to the child], and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman [the same woman—Israel], and went to make war with the remnant of her seed which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

I don't know whether you picked it up, but in verse 17 is the first allusion to the church. The woman, who is called here a "*remnant*," keeps the commandments and has the testimony of Jesus Christ. Now we can clearly say we're talking about the church.

Look at the word "remnant." I don't know whether you have a Bible that has a marginal reference, but my Bible marginal reference says "*offspring* ." This is being used in the same sense as the woman giving birth to the Christ child. The overwhelming bulk of the church is in Israel. Do you understand that? But if we understand Revelation 12 properly, there is a portion of the church that is going to go to a place prepared *with* the nation Israel. I haven't twisted a thing.

The woman is clearly identified right within the context of the chapter as not being the church until verse 17. That reference where it says, "which keep the commandments of God and has the testimony of Jesus Christ," *further identifies* who the remnant is. It identifies the *offspring* as being the brothers and sisters of the Child that was brought forth by the woman, because Israel

doesn't keep the commandments and doesn't have the testimony of Jesus Christ. The only part of Israel that keeps the commandments and has the testimony of Jesus Christ is the church within it.

We're going to go to Revelation 16 and we'll at least get a start here so that the next time I speak I can begin pretty much right here. We are beginning now to identify where Israel is mentioned in the book of Revelation. There is no doubt at all Israel is mentioned in Revelation 12, but is that the end of it? Is that the end of the mention of Israel in the book of Revelation? Not on your life! It's the most important nation on the face of the earth right now at the end-time, and its fingerprints, its handprints, its footprints are all over the end of this book.

Revelation 16:17-21 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air: and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto *her* ...[Is that a clue, brethren? Babylon is a female.] ...the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

I'm going to read now the first seven verses of Revelation 17, and this is where we'll more or less begin in the next sermon on this.

Revelation 17:1-7 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto you the judgment of the great whore that sits upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me

away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, **MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.** And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery ... [Where is Israel in the book of Revelation? It's a *mystery*. Or is it?] ...of the woman, and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and ten horns.

That looks to me like a beautiful place to stop, so we will do just that.