

THE MAN CHILD

Revelation 12:1-17—And a great sign was seen in the heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars; and being with child she cried, being in travail, and in pain to bring forth. And another sign was seen in the heaven: and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems; and his tail draws the third part of the stars of the heaven; and he cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bring forth, in order that when she brought forth he might devour her child. And she brought forth a male son, who shall shepherd all the nations with an iron rod; and her child was caught up to God and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has there a place prepared of God, that they should nourish her there a thousand two hundred and sixty days. And there was war in the heaven: Michael and his angels went to war with the dragon. And the dragon fought, and his angels; and he prevailed not, nor was their place found any more in the heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, the ancient serpent, he who is called Devil and Satan, he who deceives the whole habitable world, he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a great voice in the heaven saying, Now is come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren has been cast out, who accused them before our God day and night: and they have overcome him by reason of the blood of the Lamb, and by reason of the word of their testimony, and have not loved their life even unto death. Therefore be full of delight, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the earth and to the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great rage, knowing he has a short time. And when the dragon saw that he had been cast out into the earth, he persecuted the woman which bore the male child. And there were given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the desert into her place, where she is nourished there a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth behind the woman water as a river, that he might make her be as one carried away by a river. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was angry with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus.

Let's have a word of prayer:

Dear Lord, as we gather here in Thy presence, we are aware that the time is short, but we praise and thank Thee because we can lift up our heads knowing that our redemption has drawn nigh. Dear Lord, Thou hast put upon our hearts a real longing for Thyself; how we long to see Thee face to face. We thank Thee for Thy precious promise, but it has been long waiting. Search our hearts to see if there is anything in us that delays Thy return. Remove all the hindrances within us and prepare us and use us to bring in the King. So we offer ourselves to Thee afresh this morning and look to Thy Spirit to breathe upon Thy Word and breathe into our hearts. We are not here seeking for mental understanding. We are here to be changed and

transformed by Thy Word. So Lord, we look to Thee to work and finish Thy task. We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.

GOD NEEDS A LINK TO BRING BACK THE KING

We are gathered here for one purpose and that is to offer ourselves to be the link that will bring in our King. It is a tremendous task but it is something that is done by His grace only and not by ourselves. However, we need to humble ourselves before Him, offer ourselves to Him, allow Him to work in us and use us to be that link He has been looking for. We remember that the Lord has a way of doing things; He has His principles. When God is going to do something, even though it is His doing and the only One who is doing it, yet it pleases Him to draw His people with Him. It is like a father who is moving a piece of furniture, and the little boy says to his father, "Let me help you." So he goes to help his father and holds a part of the furniture, but actually he is putting more weight upon it. Finally, when the furniture is moved, he says, "Father, we have moved it." This is exactly what God is doing with us in the spiritual realm.

God made known His ways to Moses. And we are here to know His way. His way is always to use us as an instrument or a vessel even though He is the One who is really accomplishing everything. So this is what is needed: Will we offer ourselves to Him, allow Him to work out His full salvation and use us as the link to bring back our dear Lord Jesus?

As we consider Revelation 12 we find that this is a very important chapter. The reason is because it shows us what will happen at the end. How will the change come?

JOHN'S VISION OF THE WOMAN

John saw a vision: "And a great sign was seen in the heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars; and being with child she cried, being in travail, and in pain to bring forth."

Watchman Nee wrote a book called A Glorious Church. When it was published in China, it was called Holy Without Blame. It was published during the first two years of Communist rule because at that time there was still freedom. In this book our brother used four women to show us the history of the church. The first woman is Eve. She represents the church in God's original thought. The second woman is in Ephesians 5, and that is the woman the Lord is working to gain throughout the centuries. The third woman is the woman in Revelation 12. She represents the church in the end days. Finally, the fourth woman is the new Jerusalem, the consummation of all of God's work.

Here in chapter 12 we see this great sign in heaven—a woman clothed with the sun. In other words, this woman is clothed with heavenly glory because she is in the design of our heavenly God. The moon is under her feet because the moon represents the age of the Law as a way of preparation for the age of grace. Upon her head is a crown of twelve stars, and of course, that will bring us to Genesis 37. There we find that Joseph dreamed a dream and he saw eleven stars with a sun and moon worshipping him. The twelve stars represented the twelve tribes of Israel. God relates all His work throughout the centuries through that woman. She is with child and she is in travail and pain to bring forth this child. This tells us the story of the church and how it has gone through travail throughout the centuries to bring forth a child.

THE SIGN OF THE GREAT DRAGON

Then there is another sign, and that is the sign of a great dragon. We will remember in the very beginning in Genesis that it was a serpent that tempted Eve. Now this serpent has grown to be a dragon, "having seven heads and ten horns and on his heads seven diadems." Of course, we immediately know that this represents Satan, the adversary of God, and how he rebelled against God and in his rebellion he drew one third of the angelic hosts to follow him and cast them on the earth.

This dragon stands before the woman who is about to bring forth a child. Strangely, we discover that the dragon is not interested in the woman; instead his interest is in the womb, that which is going to bring forth the man child. What does this tell us? You remember our Lord Jesus said, "I will build My church upon this rock and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." From the very beginning of the history of the church to the very end, Satan is dead set against it because he knows that she will be the instrument used by God to bring his end. Strangely, the dragon is standing before the woman, but his interest is not in the woman because he knows she will not be able to affect him in any way. The woman has failed in her testimony; therefore, his interest is no longer in the woman. But thank God, in spite of that, in the woman's womb there is a man child, and this is where his interest is because he knows when the man child is born, that will mean his end. Thus, he is waiting there to devour him as soon as he is born.

WHO IS THE MAN CHILD?

So the question is: who is the man child? People usually interpret this man child as Christ. They think that when Christ was born that He would be the end of the enemy. But as we read carefully, we find that when this man child is born, he is raptured immediately to the throne, and this did not happen to our Lord Jesus. We know that after He was born, He was on earth for more than thirty-three years. After he died on the cross and was raised from the dead, He then ascended up to the throne. So we will ask again: Who is this man child?

The Bible tells us in verse 5: "And she brought forth a [man child], who shall shepherd all the nations with an iron rod." That is the destiny of the man child. In the book of Revelation, we find this is repeated three times. One time it refers to our Lord Jesus because He will come riding on a horse going to the battle of Armageddon. He is the One who will shepherd the people with that iron rod, and that is referring to the kingdom age. Aside from this, the other two times refer to the overcomers. One is in Revelation 2 where we find the promise to the overcomers, that they shall shepherd the nations with an iron rod. Another place is here in Revelation 12 where it is promised that they shall shepherd all the nations with an iron rod, and that is also in the kingdom age.

THE PAROUSIA OF THE LORD

So far as we understand today, we feel that most likely this man child refers to the overcomers before the coming of the Lord. As soon as he is born, he is raptured up to heaven.

Now this will bring us back to Matthew 24:39: "Noe entered into the ark, and they knew not till the flood came and took all away; thus also shall be the coming of the Son of man."

This Scripture tells us how the coming of our Lord Jesus is to take place. The word *coming* here is a special word. It means “parousia.” Those who understand Greek tell us that *parousia* means “presence.” We know that our Lord Jesus, so far as His body is concerned, is absent because He ascended to heaven. We know that His Spirit is with us, that He has never left us nor forsaken us. Yet when we think of His body, we know He is sitting at the right hand of His Father. He is absent today, but one day He will be present again. This word *parousia* does not mean one time or one act. *Parousia* is a period of time with a series of events and has a beginning and an end. That is the way our Lord Jesus is coming back again.

In Acts 1, when our Lord Jesus was leaving this earth and going back to heaven, in verse 9 it says, “And having said these things he was taken up, they beholding him, and a cloud received him out of their sight.”

THE LORD RETURNS IN THE SAME WAY HE LEFT

How did the Lord leave this earth? According to the Scripture in Acts the Lord Jesus ascended from the mount. As He was ascending, the disciples were looking at Him. After a while, He was taken by a cloud and the disciples could not see Him anymore. Nevertheless, He was still ascending. How do we know that our Lord Jesus has ascended to the throne? It is because of Pentecost where we find the Holy Spirit came down. This was a proof that He had ascended to the throne and was anointed as the Lord and Christ. And there the ointment fell down to His beard coming down upon the whole body. That is the assurance that we know He has arrived. Strictly speaking, after He ascended to the clouds, the disciples could not see Him any longer, but they were still looking up.

“And as they were gazing into heaven, as he was going, behold, also two men stood by them in white clothing, who also said, Men of Galilee, why do ye stand looking into heaven? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, shall thus come in the manner in which ye have beheld him going into heaven” (Acts 1:10-11).

In other words, the return of the Lord from heaven to earth is the reverse of the process in which He ascended. His ascension was in two parts. Although they are closely related, the first part is from the mount to the cloud—visible. The second part is from the cloud to the throne—invisible. And if His departure is like this, His presence will come in like manner. In other words, when our Lord Jesus comes from the throne to the air, it is invisible; then from the air to the mount, it is visible.

THE RAPTURE OF THE OVERCOMERS

But how does it start? That is what we find in Revelation 12 which tells us of the man child. When the man child is born, he is raptured immediately to the throne. In Matthew 24 we find that as in the days of Noah so shall be the coming of the Son of man. “Noah entered into the ark and they knew not till the flood came and took all away; thus also shall be the coming of the Son of man. Then two shall be in the field, one is taken and one is left; two women grinding at the mill, one is taken and one is left” (vvs. 39-41).

When the presence of the Lord begins, then there will be a rapture. Two women are grinding the meal; that means morning. Two are working in the fields; that means the noontime. In Luke 17, two are sleeping, one is taken and one is left; that is night. It does not

mean there are six; only two. But because the earth is round, in some places it is night and they are sleeping. In some places, it is morning and the women are grinding the meal. In other places it is noontime, and people are working in the fields.

Our question is: Who are the two? The complete number of the church is twelve, but here there are only two. Where are the ten? They are found in Matthew 25 which tells us of the ten virgins going to meet the Bridegroom. The ten virgins, strictly speaking, refer to those saints who have died throughout the centuries. The Bible tells us they took their torches and went to meet the Bridegroom but because He tarried they all grew weary and slept. The sleeping here is referring to death. Thank God, even in the first century, people were looking forward to His return. I believe the disciples in the early days, when they heard the Lord say, "I am coming to receive you to Myself," expected the Lord to come in their lifetime. They waited but the Lord seemed to delay. They passed away and died. Every century there are people waiting for the return of the Lord. The Lord can return at any time if His bride is ready, but He is delayed. And because of that delay, many saints have passed away, and the ten virgins represent the saints of the centuries that have died.

The Bible never calls the people of the world virgins because in the sight of God they are adulterers. Only those who are redeemed by the Lord are called virgins. You will recall in II Corinthians 11 that Paul said: "I have presented you to Christ as chaste virgins." We who are cleansed by the blood of the Lamb are considered as virgins who are engaged to Christ Jesus. And if we are chaste virgins, what will be our attitude and interest? Our attitude and interest will be centered upon the Lord, our Bridegroom. We will be preparing for Him. Whatever we are doing, our question is: Is that what our Lord is pleased with? The virgins lived for their future Bridegroom. These are virgins throughout the centuries that have gone out to meet the Lord. That is their attitude, and this should be our attitude. We are just passing through; we are not dwellers upon this earth. We are strangers and sojourners passing through. We are waiting for the Lord to come, and ready to meet Him; that is our attitude.

And because of the delay of His return, they all go to sleep. But thank God, one day they will hear the voice saying, "The Bridegroom comes;" and they will all be raised up. And we find that the result is the same as the two. Two are sleeping; one is taken and one is left. Two are grinding; one is taken and one is left. Two are working; one is taken, one is left. Outwardly, these two look the same. But inwardly, they are different because the Lord does not look at outward appearance; He looks upon the heart. He knows who is really waiting for Him.

Sometimes we sing songs without thinking of the meaning. There are a number of songs concerning the coming of the Lord, and in these songs it is often said that when the trumpet is sounded, then the Lord will come. But will a thief come into your house blowing a trumpet first to let you know that he is coming? Never! It is very strange; he seems to know when you are not watching. Suddenly and quietly he comes and leaves. When the thief is coming, what will he steal? Certainly he will not steal our garbage. If he does, we will welcome him every night. But strangely, he knows exactly where your treasure is and that is what he is aiming for. So that is the way the Lord is coming.

We are aware from all indications around us that the Lord's coming is very, very close, as the Bible says, even at the doors. He will be coming at any moment. But we do not know the time, the hour, the day. Throughout the centuries, people have tried to figure out when the Lord will be coming, and when they have it all figured out, what happened? People are clothed

in white, some go to the wilderness and wait for His coming. They will leave their jobs and everything to wait for the Lord to come. However, their predictions did not come true because the Lord has warned us that no one knows the time; only the Father. But we are given to know the conditions that tell us that His coming is imminent.

We are living on the very verge, as it were, of the coming or the parousia of our Lord Jesus. When this happens, the first thing that occurs upon this earth will be suddenly, without any notice, people throughout the earth will disappear—some in the morning, some at noon, others in the evening. Those who are taken are those who are ready for the Lord. This is represented by the man child.

THE MAN CHILD IS A COLLECTIVE TERM

The man child is not just one person. The man child is a collective term because Revelation 12 tells us that *they* have overcome the accuser. In other words, it is a group of overcomers, those who are ready, prepared, looking forward to be the link in the coming of the Lord. We know that when they try to penetrate to the throne in the third heaven, they have to go through the first heaven or the cloud. The cloud is where the headquarters of the adversary of God is. Satan has his headquarters in the air, and he is looking upon this earth, watching everything that is going on, trying to deceive and to kill as many as he can. However, these overcomers can get through the air because in their lives on earth, they have overcome Satan already. On the basis of their victory, they can go through the air and touch the throne. In other words, they are the welcoming party for the coming of The Lord. What a privilege! What an honor!

In one sense, we live in the most difficult time. But in another sense, we are living at a thrilling time because there is a chance that without going through death, we may be raptured alive to the throne to welcome the King back. That is the work of the overcomers.

WAR IN HEAVEN

When they reach the throne, (Revelation 12), immediately there will be war in the heaven, that is in the air. Michael and his angels will come and fight with Satan and his followers. The result is that Satan will be thrown down from the air to the earth with his fallen angels and the air is clear for the Lord to come from the throne to the cloud.

When Satan is thrown upon the earth, there will be the three and a half years of Great Tribulation. What can you expect since the trio of evil will be on this earth? Even then he will try to persecute the church, but he cannot. God has prepared a place for the church to go through time, times and half a time, which is three and a half years.

We know that according to prophetic interpretation, there are differences of opinion. Some believe the whole church will be raptured before the Great Tribulation. Others believe that the whole church will go through the tribulation and be raptured. There are others who believe that some will be raptured before the tribulation and others will be raptured after the Great Tribulation. Even though there are differences of opinions, let us listen to whatever will edify us the most. Is it not an expectation that those who are faithful to the Lord will be privileged to be raptured before the Great Tribulation?

Also in Revelation 12 we see that Satan will turn to those who have the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. In other words, he will make war with the remnant of her seed. The remnant of her seed are those who keep the commandments of God. That refers to the pious Jews. In Revelation 7 there are 144,000 of the tribes of Israel that have been sealed to go through the Great tribulation; and those also who have the testimony of Jesus which is the church. This shows that the three years and a half, so far as the Jews are concerned, is Jacob's trouble. So far as the church is concerned, it is a Great Tribulation. However, even the Great Tribulation is something that God has given to His church as a second chance. When you see what has happened, how will you feel? Of course, you will be awakened. Thank God, that even through the Great Tribulation some are willing to sacrifice their lives for the testimony of Jesus. They will be ranked among the overcomers. God has given His church, as it were, another opportunity. This is found in 1 Thessalonians 4. The trumpet will sound and those who are dead in Christ will be raised and those who are still living on earth will be changed and caught up to the air—not to the throne. Our Lord Jesus has already come from the throne to the air; therefore, they will be caught up to the air, and the whole church will be gathered there.

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

When they are gathered together in the air, the judgment seat of Christ takes place. We who are the Lord's will not appear before the Great White Throne judgment. It is a throne judgment of life and death. Because the Lord Jesus died for us on Calvary's cross, we will not die anymore. He has taken all our sins away and delivered us from the judgment of the Great White Throne. However, that does not mean as the family of God we will not be judged.

In the old days, they had big families. When I was young, I came from a big family; there were four generations living under one roof. From time to time, the family father would gather the whole family to him for a meeting. Only those who are of the family were invited to attend. The elder of the family would be seated on a lifted place called a *bema*. The rest would be standing before him. It was a family judgment. Those who had honored the family would be praised before all and rewarded. Those who had brought shame to the family would be disciplined. However, that does not mean because they are disciplined they are no longer in the family. On the contrary, they are still in the family.

Discipline is necessary. Without discipline we cannot grow properly. That is a problem in this world today. Our heavenly Father will discipline His sons because He loves us. Out of discipline, we will be perfected, we will be partakers of His divine nature. Here you find in the *bema*, in the judgment seat of Christ in the air, the family of God will be judged because judgment begins with the house of God. What happens on this earth? That is the seven vials, the wrath of God will be poured out on this earth.

THE SECRET OF THE OVERCOMERS

So far as we understand, this is what is going to happen in this world. Now the thing is, how do these overcomers overcome Satan the accuser? You know, Satan is the accuser. He is accusing us all the time before the Lord, just like he accused Job before God. When God challenged Satan with Job, he accused Job. Satan is always doing that. Whether his accusation is

real or unreal, and unfortunately some things are real, but most of the times it is unreal. Because of his accusation, our conscience bothers us and we become weak spiritually.

I remember how Martin Luther had this dream. As he was going on with the work of Reformation, he dreamed that he saw Satan coming to him and showed him a scroll full of words within and without. That scroll was the sins of Martin Luther. Satan said, "How dare you do the work of Reformation! Look at yourself." Thank God, Martin Luther took a pen and wrote upon it: "The blood of Jesus cleanses from all sins." And Satan disappeared. He is the accuser.

The Blood of the Lamb

How do we overcome him? Revelation 12:11 tells us: "And they have overcome him by reason of the blood of the Lamb." That is the first thing. Do not think you have outgrown the need of the blood of the Lamb. The closer you are walking with the Lord, the more you will treasure the precious blood of the Lord. Even the tears of our repentance need to be cleansed by the blood of the Lord. They knew the value of the blood, and they applied the blood upon their lives. The overcomers are not the special ones, the perfect ones. They are the same as we are, but they know the preciousness of the blood. They depend upon the cleansing of the blood throughout their lives. That is the reason why they are always pure and righteous in the sight of God.

By the Word of Their Testimony

2) "They have overcome Satan by reason of the word of their testimony." We have been entrusted with the testimony of Jesus. We are here to testify that Jesus *is* Lord, not by words only but by life. If it is by life, then our words will be powerful and effective. I think it is very funny when you read Acts 17 where we find the sons of the Jewish high priest Scheva. They were exorcists and tried to drive out evil spirits. And because they saw what Paul had done in the name of the Lord Jesus, they tried to imitate Paul and do the same. Two of the sons were exorcising people and said, "In the name of Jesus that Paul preached we cast you out." And the demon said, "Jesus I know, Paul I am familiar, but who are you?" And he jumped on those two men and they ran away naked. Unless our word agrees with our life, it has no power. If our life bears the testimony of Jesus that He is really Lord of our life, then when we say, "Jesus is Lord," that is powerful; the enemy cannot stand it.

They Loved Not Their Lives Unto Death

3) "They loved not their lives even unto death." The word life here is soul-life. The Lord Jesus calls us to deny ourselves, take up the cross and follow Him. These brothers and sisters denied themselves. They did not cater to their own desires, wishes or intentions, but they were willing to lay down their soul-life and allow the life of Christ to rule their lives. They loved not their soul-life even unto death. And with that kind of attitude, the enemy is defeated.

That is the secret of the overcomers. Praise God, this is an open secret. It is for every one of us. So God's desire is that everyone who is redeemed is to be an overcomer because He is *the* overcomer. As I John says, "We overcome him, Satan, by faith in our Lord Jesus." It is available to every one of us, and this is the link that will bring back the King. May the Lord help us!

Shall we pray:

Dear Lord, how we praise and thank Thee because Thou hast not only called us to be overcomers, Thou hast also shown us how to be an overcomer. So Lord, we just want to avail ourselves of all the provisions Thou hast provided for us. Lord, we are in despair of ourselves. Our expectation is upon Thee. This day we want to rededicate our lives to Thee, surrender ourselves totally to Thee and say, "Lord, take us and work in us. Deliver us and fill us with Thyself that we may be those who have the testimony of Jesus, that we may be those who will bring in the King, and that we may be those who are the link that Thou art looking for." We thank and praise Thee because it is all of grace, all of mercy. We worship Thee; in Thy precious name. Amen.