

# The Dragons War Against The Remnant

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

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*The notes (Presentation Page xx) are a reference to the Presentation version of this sermon.*

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(Presentation Page 2) Revelation chapter 12 is one of the greatest chapters in all the Bible, encompassing the whole of this earth's story in a short 17-verse span. Previously in this chapter we've studied verses 1-14. (Presentation Page 3) Verses 1-5 describe Satan's attack against Jesus when He was born; (Presentation Page 4) verses 7-9 describe the casting down of the dragon from heaven, which took place in two phases. Before the creation of this earth his unlimited access throughout the universe was revoked (but he was allowed limited access to heaven at certain council meetings as described in Job 1 and 2), but after Jesus' victory on the cross all access to heaven was removed. This came about because he somehow come to the idea that he was equal with God and deserved the honor and worship that alone belongs to the Creator. We discovered that Jesus, under the name "Michael" was the special object of Satan's hatred.

(Presentation Page 5) Very quickly the devil attempted to "devour" the newly born Christian Church following the return of Jesus to heaven. (Presentation Pages 6, 7) Christians early adopted the symbol of the fish because the word in the Greek language for fish is *ichthus* (as in *ichthyology*), the five letters of which are each the beginning letter for a term for Jesus. There were some particularly bloody periods of persecution through which the church passed, notably at the hands of Nero, who blamed Christians for the fires that ravaged Rome and Emperor Diocletian, who unleashed a terrific span of ten years of assault, from 303-313 A.D. Yet the church survived and even thrived during these periods of hardship.

The devil then employed another strategy. He changed gears. Christianity became recognized as a legal religion, even with the new Emperor Constantine professing allegiance thereto. The teachings of Jesus were replaced by man's wisdom. The institutions put in place by the Lord were replaced by those of pagan origin. The freedom of conscience so highly prized by our gracious God was removed and it became a crime to believe and practice doctrines not endorsed by the recognized church. Those who desired to remain faithful had to flee to the remote areas for safety.

(Presentation Page 8) Then we read, "Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, (Presentation Page 9) that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent." Revelation 12:13, 14. (Presentation Page 10) These verses tell the story of the persecutions which

raged during the middle ages, the 1260 literal years, which began in the year 538 A.D. and concluded in the year 1798 A.D.

(Presentation Page 11) We saw that the church in the middle ages also closely reflects the life of Elijah. When the ancient prophet told Ahab there would be no more rain, Elijah fled to the wilderness, where he was miraculously sustained for a period of 3 ½ years. James 5:17. Revelation makes use of his experience to illustrate what would happen in the “3 ½ years” or “1260 days” (literal years) when the church had to find safety in the shelter of the remote places, but was sustained by God’s hand as was Elijah.

(Presentation Page 12) “So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. (Presentation Page 13) But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. (Presentation Page 14) And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, (Presentation Page 15) who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Revelation 12:15-17.

(Presentation Page 16) Let’s think of what we’re being told in verse 15; the water that was spewed from the serpent’s mouth after the woman, to cause her to be carried away. Two applications of this verse emerge. (Presentation Page 17) First, in the Bible, water is often used as a symbol of people (Revelation 17:15), and many times it specifically depicts the rushing of attacking armies. (Presentation Page 18) David wrote, “If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us alive, when their wrath was kindled against us; then the waters would have overwhelmed us, the stream would have gone over our soul; then the swollen waters would have gone over our soul.” Psalm 124:2-5.

Back in Isaiah’s day the armies of Sennecherib of Assyria stood ready, with Katrina-like destruction, to overrun Judah. (Presentation Page 19) “Now therefore behold, the Lord brings up over them the waters of the River, strong and mighty--the king of Assyria and all his glory; he will go up over all his channels and go over all his banks. He will pass through Judah, he will overflow and pass over, he will reach up to the neck.” Isaiah 8:7, 8. (Presentation Page 20) “Woe to the multitude of many people who make a noise like the roar of the seas, and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters. The nations will rush like the rushing of many waters; but God will rebuke them and they will flee far away.” Isaiah 17:12, 13.

(Presentation Page 21) “Who is this coming up like a flood, whose waters move like the rivers? Egypt rises up like a flood, and its waters move like the rivers; and he says, ‘I will go up and cover the earth, I will destroy the city and its inhabitants.’” Jeremiah 46:7, 8. (Presentation Page 22) “Behold, waters rise out of the north, and shall be an overflowing flood; they shall overflow the land and all that is in it, the city and those who dwell within; then the men shall cry, and all the inhabitants of the land shall wail at the noise of the stamping hooves of his strong horses, at the rushing of his chariots.” Jeremiah 47:2, 3. It will be crucial to have this image of the flood waters of attacking armies in mind when we come to Revelation chapter 16.

(Presentation Page 23) The devil spewed water out of his mouth to overwhelm the woman. What this means is that the devil inspired the Church of the middle ages to hunt God's faithful as if they were animals, sending their armies out to ravage and destroy. Sometimes God intervened and gave victory to the vastly outnumbered gatherings of His faithful; sometimes their blood was shed as martyrs to their faith. Unnumbered millions perished by sword, spear, the rack or the stack during this lengthy period of papal domination.

The "flood" that was spewed from the serpent's mouth represents the hordes of attacking armies sent to eliminate the dissenters; it also represents the attempts to "water down" the truths which they held so dearly. The passage reads "The serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood." (Presentation Page 24) In addressing the Ephesian believers, Paul wrote, "That we should no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive." Ephesians 3:14.

What was it that carved out this special group of followers? It was their understanding of theological truths based on the Word of God. Because of this, special branches of the Roman Church were developed to counter act the impact of the Scriptural truths preached by the reformers. The Jesuits, begun by Ignatius of Loyola, were trained to be defenders of the faith of Catholicism. Through their theologians, teachings were disseminated which had the effect of diluting the doctrines espoused by the reformers. Particularly in the area of prophetic interpretation, in which the reformers were crystal clear in their understanding that the papacy met the specifications of prophecy relating to the antichrist and the horn power of Daniel 7, different interpretations were introduced which in time "watered down" the straight teachings of Protestantism. Many were "carried away" by the teachings of counter-reformation theology and lost their way. Most of Protestantism today has been carried far away from the beliefs of their forefathers.

(Presentation Page 25) To escape the armies of Europe, believers began to think of other places in which they might live. Then it was that "the earth helped the woman." Remember that the image of "water" brings to mind "multitudes." The "earth," in symbolic prophecy, refers to relatively uninhabited places. Thus the pilgrim fathers set their sails for the "New World" for the purpose of escaping the tyranny and persecution which had plagued them for so many centuries. The new land of America offered the opportunity to practice their faith without the oppression of Catholicism. The Lord had His hand in all this, and prophecy was fulfilled in the landing of the Mayflower. In this way, the "earth" helped the "woman" by allowing believers to worship according to the dictates of their consciences.

There is another way in which the "earth helped the woman." In the centuries following the Reformation, there began to emerge great skepticism concerning the reliability of the Scriptures. Doubt was cast on its authenticity, its historicity. Could the Book be trusted? About this time, especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the field of Biblical Archeology was developed. In 1798

(an interesting year for students of prophecy), Napoleon sent engineers and men of science and letters to Egypt to discover her secrets. The next year the Rosetta Stone was found, containing script in both Greek, which was known, and Egyptian hieroglyphics, which up to that point was unknown. The results of being able to read Egyptian hieroglyphics led to an understanding of life in ancient times which corroborated the Scriptures in a large way. As archeologists unearthed artifacts long covered by the dust of centuries, facts were brought to light confirming the Scriptures, authenticating the Word of God. The “earth helped the woman” by restoring confidence in the Bible through the discovery of archeological data. The “rocks cried out” their secrets which bolstered faith in the Word.

Now we come to verse seventeen. (Presentation Page 26) “And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, (Presentation Page 27) who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus.” Let’s think first of this phrase “the rest of her offspring.” The KJV reads, “the remnant of her seed.” This verse is describing the last remaining edition of God’s faithful. There’s much talk today of not wanting to be “left behind,” and to be sure, when Jesus returns, we don’t want to be left behind. But we must not ignore the large quantity of Scripture which extols the “remaining,” “that which is left,” “the remnant.” (Presentation, Pages 28, 29) A remnant from a bolt of cloth is that which is of the same character but which is the last piece.

The Bible has much to say about the “remnant,” or the “ones who are left.” It is drawn from the image, so familiar in their agricultural setting, of the harvest, in which the heads of grain are cut down and then threshed, usually being trodden down by the foot of an animal. Then there is “shaking” and “sifting,” a process by which the outer husks are separated from the valuable kernel of the grain. (Presentation Page 30) Jesus said to Peter, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.” Luke 22:31, 32.

To what was Jesus referring in this passage? He was speaking of the trial through which Peter would pass as he was being questioned about being a disciple of Jesus. Peter would be “shaken” and “sifted” by the ordeal, to see what would emerge; the worthless outer husk, or the precious kernel. Note that even though Jesus prayed for Peter, his faith did fail and he fell to temptation. He should have listened to Jesus’ invitation to “watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation;” instead he was overcome by sleep and when the hour of trial came, he slipped and denied his Lord.

The concept of being “left” in the good sense goes back to Old Testament times. (Presentation Page 31) “In that day the Branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious; and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and appealing for those of Israel who have escaped. And it shall come to pass that he who is left in Zion and he who remains in Jerusalem will be called holy (Presentation Page 32) --everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem, when the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the

Spirit of judgment and by the Spirit of burning.” Isaiah 4:2-4. In this passage, we want to be among the ones left; the ones who remain!

Other passages which employ this term in a positive way include Joel 2:32: (Presentation Page 33) “And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the remnant whom the LORD calls.” (Presentation Page 34) “And it shall come to pass in that day that the remnant of Israel, and such as have escaped of the house of Jacob, will never again depend on him who defeated them, but will depend on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.” Isaiah 10:20, 21.

The wonderful story of Judah’s deliverance from Sennacherib bears on this. King Hezekiah implored the prophet Isaiah to pray. (Presentation Page 35) “It may be that the LORD your God will hear all the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to reproach the living god, and will reprove the words which the LORD your God has heard. Therefore lift up you prayer for the remnant that is left.” Isaiah relayed the answer the Lord gave him and said, (Presentation Page 36) “This shall be a sign to you: the remnant who have escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit j\upward. For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant, and those who escape from Mount Zion. The zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.” II Kings 19:4, 29-31.

There are many other Bible references that use the term remnant this way. On the other hand, we must recognize the two “remnants” of Revelation. We want to be in the “remnant” of chapter 12:19; we don’t want to be in the remnant described in chapter 19. “Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest (“remnant” in KJV: same word as in 12:19) were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse.” Revelation 19:20, 21.

(Presentation Page 37) We are given the clearest identifying marks as to who the “remnant” of chapter 12 are. (Presentation Pages 38, 39) They are the ones who “keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Do you want to be a part of this remnant? Are you attached to a body of believers which meets the specifications given in this passage? Bear in mind that our obedience to His law does not qualify us for heaven; only His grace can do that. Bear in mind also that our obedience to His law is entirely dependent upon His Spirit being within us, writing the precepts of His law upon our hearts according to the provisions of the New Covenant. Hebrews 8:8-10. Yet the Scriptures invite us to keep His law. The wise man Solomon concluded his sermon with the words, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment into judgment, including every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil.” Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14. By the way, these verses have a direct relationship with the message of the first angel in Revelation 14:7.

(Presentation Page 40) When it speaks of the “commandments of God” there can be no doubt but that it refers to the Ten Commandments. When a certain young man approached Jesus and asked Him what he should do to inherit eternal life, Jesus replied, “You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Do not defraud,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’” Mark 10:19. Without question “the commandments” of which Jesus spoke were the Ten Commandments. When Jesus referred to the traditions of the Jews transgressing the commandment of God, He was speaking directly of the Fifth Commandment, “Honor you father and your mother.” Matthew 15:3, 4.

Those who are privileged to be a part of the remnant will not keep just nine of the Ten Commandments. They will keep all ten of them. They will not be keep a set of commandments which include part of God’s commandments and part of man’s commandments which have replaced God’s commandments. Their loyalty and love to Jesus their Savior will be exhibited in willing and joyful obedience to all His commandments.

The second identifying clue in this passage says that the remnant “have the testimony of Jesus.” To what is that referring? To what is that referring? (Presentation, Page 41) We are told later in Revelation that the “testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.”

Revelation 19:10. While we’re looking at this verse, compare it carefully with what is said in the last chapter of Revelation. In chapter 19, John “fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, ‘See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus.’ Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy.”

(Presentation, Page 42) Later, John again fell at the angel escort to worship him and was told, “See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets.”

Revelation 22:9. Do you see how a comparison of these verses makes it clear that the ones who have the “testimony of Jesus” are “the prophets”?

The “testimony of Jesus” is the message prophets were called to bear. (Presentation, Page 43) John explains as he opens his letter that he “bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, and to all things that he saw.” Revelation 1:2. The “testimony of Jesus” is the content of the message the prophet bears. The Word of God bears witness, or testimony about Jesus, whether Old or New Testament. (Presentation, Page 44) Speaking of the (Old Testament) Scriptures, Jesus stated, “they testify of Me.” John 5:39. What He is saying is that “the prophets of old had the testimony of Jesus.”

This was done through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (II Peter 1:19-21), Who impressed on the prophets’ minds the truths about Jesus they needed to convey. (Presentation, Page 45) Before the Babylonian captivity we’re told, “Yet the LORD testified against Israel and against Judah, by all of his prophets, namely every seer, saying, ‘Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments.’” II Kings 17:13. (Presentation, Page 46) Nehemiah confessed, “Yet for many years You had patience with them, and testified against them by Your Spirit in Your prophets, yet they would not listen.” Nehemiah 9:30. (Presentation, Page 47) Peter stated, “Of this salvation the

prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ Who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow." I Peter 1:10, 11. (Presentation, Page 48) "Testify" is what prophets do; "Jesus" is the One of Whom they testify and the Holy Spirit is the Means by which the message is given. The "Spirit of prophecy" is the Holy Spirit Who impresses prophets' minds with messages concerning Christ, the "testimony of Jesus." Together, these form the communication God has been gracious to give to us.

Are we told that there will be prophecy in the last days? Yes! (Presentation, Page 49) "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." Joel 2:28. Seventh-day Adventists have recognized the prophetic gift in the life and ministry of Ellen G. White, a woman with less than 3 grades of formal schooling who received more than 2,000 visions during her lifetime. She became the most prolific female American author on any subject. All of her writings point us to the Word of God as the only Source of truth and to Jesus as our only Savior. (Presentation, Page 50) Our church upholds the Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath of the Fourth Commandment, and has benefited immensely from the ministry of the prophetic gift exercised through Ellen White.

The members of the Seventh-day Adventist church are not perfect. In fact, we are "wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked." Revelation 3:17. (Presentation, Page 51) Yet the message God has given us is faultless and timely, calculated to "prepare a people for the coming of the Lord." You won't find another group in the world that meets the specifications of Revelation 12:17, keeping (all) the commandments of God and having the "testimony of Jesus," that is, the prophetic gift. But don't look at people! They will let you down. Look to Jesus! The message He has given us to share with the world needs to be heard.