***The Nation of Israel

RV151-01***

We are studying Revelation 11:19 through Revelation 12:6. Our subject is "Tribulation Personalities." This is segment number two.

In this portion of the book of the Revelation, the apostle John is given a vision of the true temple of God in heaven, of which the Mosaic tabernacle and the Solomonic temple were earthly replicas. We looked into that in some detail in the previous session. I found that it was indeed impressive to you. I have not had in recent times such an explosion of enthusiasm (of comments after a service), as I did after the previous session. We discovered what it was that John was looking at, and the full implications of what he saw.

John sees that the heavenly temple is opened, so that he can look, as a matter of fact, into the very holy of holies itself, which housed the most sacred object in the temple, the ark of the covenant. The ark represented the sinless God-man, Jesus Christ, in both His deity and His humanity. The ark was topped by a lid which was called the mercy seat, upon which was placed two golden angels with their wings touching each other, looking down. They were a special holy class of angel called the cherubim class. This mercy seat constitutes the throne of God in heaven.

The presence of God in the Holy of Holies was indicated in the earthly tabernacle and temple by the brilliant glow of the glory of God over the mercy seat. We call that the Shekinah glory, which means the glory of His presence. As the symbol of Jesus Christ, the ark was naturally a most holy object, and was therefore not accessible to the view or to the touch of people in general, as sinners. Only the high priest once-a-year could approach God in the holy of holies with the blood of an animal sacrifice which he sprinkled on the mercy seat. This, of course, symbolized the holy sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God, whose blood would be shed upon the cross.

As we saw in the previous session, having done that, following His resurrection (His entrance into the heavenly holy of holies) to declare the provision of his blood on that mercy seat once and for all, so that no longer again would a sacrifice for sin be necessary. Again, I cannot stress strongly enough to you that the sin issue is dead. Nobody has a problem with sin. The most slimy creature on the face of the earth does not have a problem with sin relative to God. He has only one problem: to realize that the veil hiding the holy of holies has been torn open. You can walk into the presence of God. Your sin is not a problem. The only problem is trusting in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. Your sins will not take you into hell. Your failure to trust in Christ, and to have His atonement (his covering) for your sin applied to you – that will take you into hell.

It is great to understand the grace principle of freedom from moral guilt because Christ died. John understood this immediately. He was reminded of this when he could look in this vision; see God's heavenly temple; and, wonder of wonders, look into the holy of Holies itself – the very presence of this object which represented the God-man Jesus Christ. With the atonement of Christ made, with His own self-sacrifice on the cross for the sins of mankind, access to the presence of God in the innermost recesses of the temple are now open to anyone.

**Propitiation**

The fact that John is permitted to look boldly into the heavenly holy of holies indicates that the Holy God has been propitiated concerning man sin. The word "propitiated" means "satisfied." God's justice has been satisfied concerning payment for sin. Death has been provided.

God, at this point in the tribulation, is now about to restore his Jewish nation to world supremacy. So, it is indeed fitting that suddenly we see the temple in heaven, and we are introduced into the holy of holies itself. The open holy of holies is actually a reassurance that God is going to keep His Word to Abraham. He is going to fulfill the Abrahamic covenant. He is going to apply salvation to the Jewish nation. He is going to return them to their land. He is going to make them the leading nation of the world. He is going to govern all nations of the world with the Jewish people.

The willful sins of the Jews drove their holy God from them, and they lost their earthly covenant. John is happy to see the true ark in heaven, fully covered now by the blood of Jesus Christ, giving full access to the presence of God in the holy of holies. Now the Jews are going to go back to their God in the tribulation, and they're going to go back through the One whom they now reject, Jesus Christ.

In Revelation 11:19, in the latter part of that verse, we have this added: As John rejoices in what he sees in the open available temple, he also suddenly sees that there were flashes of lightning; sounds and peels of thunder; an earthquake; and, a great hail storm. These natural phenomena symbolize impending disaster for the tribulation unbelievers. Please remember that we have now gone considerably through the seven-year tribulation period. We are probably in year number seven. We're down to the very end of it. We're way into the latter part of the second half, and things are now going to rapidly come to a climax.

These acts of nature create havoc on earth, and they signal the imminent wrath of God to be exercised against all mankind. God is signaling His final vindication of His Jewish people. God has to be Himself. The time has come for His holiness to be expressed against the evil of mankind.

When people get away with evil, and when they break the moral rules of Scripture, they always make the mistake that God is not going to do anything about it. I can assure you that He has to be Himself. Part of what He has to be is very patient, and very longsuffering, giving you a chance to change your ways. But if you will not, I can assure you that He's going to come down on you with both hands and both feet, and then you will think back and wish that you had acted more wisely.

Those, finally, who have been obedient to Bible doctrine in this tribulation era will be proven right before all the world. Those in the tribulation who have trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation will escape God's wrath. They will then learn indeed how true the promises of God are – that when God saves you, He does it once and for all, for good.

In 2 Timothy 2:19, the apostle Paul says, "Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal: the Lord knows those who are His, and let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness." God knows those who are trusted in Christ our Savior. These are the people who, above all, should avoid wickedness.

Again, I stress to you that the only way your salvation could be secure is because God did the whole thing, and you cannot foul it up in any way. You had no part in it. It is the utmost expression of arrogance for anybody to say, "I can lose my salvation." That is arrogance to the extreme, because what you are saying is that you have come up with a sin that God couldn't handle. Yet, John says, "The way into the holy of holies is open. Sin is not a problem with God. "But how you deal with His Son – that is the issue. From the same ark of the covenant, the throne of God, comes mercy to those who trust Christ for salvation, and a wrathful judgment to those who refuse to bow to the Saviors authority.

Well, the current delusions of mankind are still what they have always been. The world leaders today, as you know, are on a euphoric high, thinking that they are creating an earthly paradise without Jesus Christ. They're seeking peace without the Prince of Peace. They're claiming wisdom without Jesus, the Wonderful Counselor. They pursue justice and righteousness in society, without Jesus Christ to establish it. Mankind is claiming self-deification while rejecting Jesus, the Mighty God. Paternalistic governments are instituted while dismissing Jesus, the Eternal Father. A new order of world government is proclaimed without the shoulders of Jesus to rest upon.

In the Bible, you will find every one of these requirements stated specifically concerning the role of Christ in a world that has come to its senses. There is no way that the rulers of today's nations are going to achieve what they think they are achieving. From the time of Nimrods Tower of Babel, rebellious mankind has sought to build a millennium without the King, Jesus Christ. Today, the United Nations is in hot pursuit of the same millennium of peace, prosperity, and brotherhood.

**John Lennon's Imagine**

Last week, the United Nations observed the fifth anniversary of former Beatle, the late John Lennon. The United Nations' world leaders expressed their dream, which they are pursuit pursuing, of a new world order created by mankind by playing a recording of John Lennon singing his song Imagine. Do you remember the lyrics? Here they are:

"Imagine there's no heaven.
It's easy if you try;
No hell below us,
above us only sky.
Imagine all the people
living for today.

"Imagine there's no countries.
It isn't hard to do;
Nothing to kill or die for,
and no religion too.

"Imagine all the people
living life in peace.
You may say I'm a dreamer,
but I'm not the only one.
I hope someday you'll join us,
and the world will be as one.

"Imagine no possessions.
I wonder if you can;
no need for greed or hunger,
a brotherhood of man.

"Imagine all the people
sharing all the world.
You may say I'm a dreamer,
but I'm not the only one.
I hope someday you'll join us,
and the world will live as one."

This indeed is the philosophical expression of the leaders of the world today, and it is flying in the face of both Scripture and Almighty God. This is a very attractive melody, if you have ever heard it. Lennon sings it with great, deep, moving emotion. He really believed it. He really pursued it. This was his hope. And you notice what it says. It denies the reality of a heaven or hell that one has to face after death. It praises an existential lifestyle of indulging self to the hilt for the moment ("Living for today").

It idealizes internationalism under a one-world government ("Imagine there's no countries"). Boy, does the devil love that? From the very first objective at the Tower of Babel, do you know what the problem was? You remember the divine Godhead said, "Look what man is doing. He's creating a world unity (a world government). It'll be an international world, and nothing of evil that comes to his mind will now be restrained. His hand cannot be kept back from anything if we let him keep doing this one. Why? Because if you have one-world government and one power, then you can subject everyone to whatever Satan wants to do. But when you have individual nations, you can have a communist country where access to the Word of God is denied, but you can have other countries of freedom where access to the Word of God is wide open.

It's a very stupid person in the political realm who does not understand that the Bible is against internationalism, and it is for nationalism. You remember that Paul, when he spoke to the philosophers on Mars Hill, talked about a God who is not made of wood and stone, and who does not live in houses made by man, but is the God, who is the Creator, who has made man, and who has set the boundaries of their existence (the boundaries of their lives). God Himself has appointed of national boundaries, because Satan wants to control everything, and internationalism goes to that.

Lennon did not understand what he was talking about. This song imagines a world free of wars and universal peace on earth ("Nothing to die for"). Yet, our Lord says, "You're going to have wars and rumors of wars right until the time that I come back."

The lyrics of this song rejoice in no religion, meaning no Bible from God to proclaim His laws ("No religion too"). It glories in socialism as the way to prosperity, plenty, and a brotherhood of sharing – "Imagine all the people; no possessions; the world is one; no greed; no hunger; the brotherhood of man."

Today we see communist countries running as fast as they can from socialism because of the miseries this concept creates. Lennon dreams of a united world of mutual goodwill; compassion; and, camaraderie, and hopes that all of you will someday join him.

Three hours before John Lennon was murdered, as he was entering the Dakota apartment in Manhattan where he lived, he had spoken to a group of young people who were reminiscing of their activities in the youth revolution of the 1960s, and who were rejoicing over the progress that they had made toward a new world. And Lennon said to them, "Let's keep moving ahead. Let's keep working to bring about the ideal world" that they had envisioned. Then he proceeded to: "Thank God," and then he used the words, "or whatever is out there" for the help that we have been given.

Three hours later, he lay dead before the Dakota apartment complex. John Lennon, at this moment, no longer wonders what is out there after death. He has found that there is a holy God of great wrath against sin which has not been covered by Jesus Christ. And the pity of this is that John, in his vision, sees all that is unnecessary. The way to the presence of God is wide open. Sin is not an issue, but only Jesus Christ. That's what's out there, and your subjection in accepting His sacrifice on your behalf.

Today, John Lennon no longer vainly imagines a millennial world without the Lord Jesus Christ, as he did in the lyrics of his song. John Lennon, the Christ rejecters, has learned the hard way that the mercy of the holy of holies could have been a place for him of grace, but instead it will forever be a place of divine wrath and judgment.

The description and nature seen by the apostle John signals that God is ready to move with great divine wrath now against the antichrist's world. In Revelation 12:1, John says, "Suddenly, there appears in heaven a great sign." This word "sign" looks like this in the Greek Bible: "semeion." It is a word which is used to convey the concept of "a symbol." It is conveying an important truth in symbolic form. This "sign" is a major revelation, so it is called "the great sign."

**A Woman**

It is significant that the Holy Spirit inserts this word, because usually what the book of the Revelation says is to be understood literally. It's not symbolic. However, here he's going to tell us that John sees something, but it isn't actually that. What he sees is an image that stands for something else. It's a symbol. This time it is a symbol. There appears in the heaven (that is; in the sky) a woman, and this woman is clothed in a very significant way. The word "clothed" tells us something about this woman relative to where she got this clothing. It's the Greek word "periballo." "Periballo" really needs "to throw something around yourself." This is in that Greek perfect tense, which means that some place in the past, God put something around this woman. And what He put around her has continued down to the present, and in fact will continue forever. In fact, this is passive voice, which tells us that this woman did not choose to dress in this way. It is God, who in His sovereignty, chose to dress her in this way. It is a participle which gives us a spiritual truth.

**Israel**

This woman, as we shall see in a moment, refers to the nation of Israel. She is clothed in a special divine mission – the Jewish people, and the mission that God has for them. It is passive because they didn't select it. It was God who selected it for them, and clothed them in it. As so often happens with us, God is the one who reaches down, and He calls us. God is the one who reaches down and gives you the ability that you have to serve the Lord in some particular capacity.

**Spiritual Gifts**

Somebody told me about speaking to a charismatic lady who was all agog with the supernatural gifts that she imagines the Charismatics exercise. She said, "I cannot believe that you would not ask God to give you the gift of tongues." She, of course, was not talking about speaking in foreign languages. I guarantee you, if that gift existed today, I, for one, would spend a lot of time in prayer asking God to give me a foreign language. I would love to be able to speak in foreign languages, which is what they did in New Testament times. But she is such an ignorant person that she did not even know that the Bible says, "God the Holy Spirit sovereignly decides, at the point of your salvation, what to give you as a spiritual gift of the nine operating spiritual gifts with which you will serve your God."

This is like the natural abilities you have. Some people are born with abilities. They can just do things. Others of us go to school, and we take classes, and we practice, and we try, and we can never do those things very readily. Some people have a natural gift. They can do it. They just have an ability to do certain things. How do they get it? Genetically. They were just born with it. The same thing happened spiritually. God chooses you.

So, here's this whole nation (this woman – Israel), and suddenly God takes an insignificant tiny group of people, beginning with Abraham, and He makes them a special people that He clothes with a special destiny. This woman is not too hard to identify because of the way she is presented. And because this is a sign, John didn't actually see a lady up there. He saw an image of a woman, but it really wasn't a person standing there. But this image did represent something: "She was clothed with the sun. The moon was under her feet, and she had a crown on her head of 12 stars."

Again, we remind you, that the way we interpret the book of the Revelation is not by guesswork and imagining what we think this could possibly mean, but we go back to Scripture. It is predictable what the Catholics would have done with this. Immediately, this woman becomes the virgin Mary, and many Protestants, because they do not understand (they do not have a frame of reference of the distinct mission of Israel and the church) have ended up making this woman the church. But neither the virgin Mary nor the church fits the details of this sign.

The Holy Spirit gives us the clues in other parts of Scripture. This is not the church as the bride of Christ. This is not the virgin Mary. But if we go back to Genesis 37:9-11, we very readily see immediately the frame of reference background for this particular vision. What you find in the book of the Revelation is explained by the use of those symbols elsewhere in the Bible. Genesis 37:9-11 is describing the dream that Joseph, the son of Jacob and Rachel, had:

"Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, 'Lo, I've had still another dream. And behold, the sun, and the moon, and 11 stars were bowing down to me,' and he related it to his father and to his brother." His father, Jacob, interpreted the dream right on target. He understood immediately what the dream meant. The father was shocked because of what he understood clearly that it meant.

His father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?" Jacob was right on target. He recognized that the sun was father Jacob; that the moon was mother Rachel; and, the 11 stars were the 11 other brothers that Joseph had. They did not welcome this. The brothers were jealous of him. But his father kept the saying in his mind. Jacob understood that this boy was not a bad kid. This was a splendid young man. This was a highly moral boy. This was a boy who was very dear to him because he was the child of his right woman, Rachel, the girl he really loved before he got tangled up with her older sister and other women who were extraneous to his life.

So, Joseph was very dear to Jacob, and he knew that this boy was not the kind who went around making up things and lying. So, Jacob didn't fully understand. He understood the meaning of the dream, but he had to put it on hold as to what God was trying to say, since he understood that God, in those days (not today, but in those days), did speak to people in dreams.

So, the woman in Revelation 12 is, by this same imagery, the nation of Israel descended from Jacob's family. Remember that Jacob's name was changed to Israel. This is the family which became the channel for spiritual enlightenment to the world. God has preserved the Jewish people to fulfill His covenant promises to Abraham concerning his descendants.

Furthermore, in the Bible, we have this confirmed by the fact that Israel is described as a woman. For example, we see this in Isaiah 26:17-18: "As the pregnant woman approaches the time to give birth, she writhes and cries out in her labor pains. Thus were we before You, O Lord." You will notice in verse 2 that this woman that John sees, symbolizing Israel, is a woman who is in the agonies of labor pains. This is exactly the same picture you have in Isaiah. Here Isaiah is talking about the agonies of the nation of Israel under its suffering at the hands of pagans, and suffering under the judgments of God. He is comparing their sufferings for their sins to the great pain that is involved in bearing the child.

Notice Isaiah 66:7 also: "Before she travailed, she brought forth (before her pain came, she gave birth to) a boy." Here again, Israel is being portrayed as a woman in birth pangs.

In the Old Testament, Israel was actually viewed as a woman who was married to Jehovah, but she proved to be Jehovah's unfaithful wife. Isaiah 54:4: "'Fear not, for you will not be put to shame, neither feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced, but you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood. You will remember no more. For your husband is your Maker (he speaking to the nation of Israel) whose name is the Lord of Hosts. And your redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, who is called the God of all the earth. For the Lord has called you like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even like a wife of one's youth when she is rejected,' says your Lord."

Here, God is encouraging the Jewish people saying, "Yes, I married you, and then you promptly went to adultery. You were unfaithful to Me. The wife of My youth became the wife of My great grief." But He said, "I have not forgotten you," and that's very important: "I'm going to pick you up because I made a promise to Abraham, and I confirmed it to David. I'm going to make a big nation out of you. You're going to govern the world. But in the meantime, you're going to bring a lot of suffering on yourself, because you can't get your doctrine straight and be obedient to it."

Jeremiah 3:6-10 also gives us this same idea of an unfaithful wife: "When the Lord said to me in the days of Josiah the King, 'Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill, and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there.'" They practiced their worship of Baal, which was a sex cult, on little green hills around the countryside: "And I thought, after she has done all these things, she will return to Me. But she did not return, and her treacherous sister, Judah, saw it. And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away, and given her a writ of divorce. Yet, her treacherous sister, Judah, did not fear, but she went and was a harlot also."

God is expressing His own amazement. He said, "Here Israel practiced the phallic cult of worshiping Baal. She did it openly on these hills, and I thought that she would become disgusted with herself, and come back to me, but she didn't. But if that wasn't bad enough, Judah, the southern kingdom, watched, and they saw that I finally picked up all those ten tribes, and I turned the Assyrians loose on them, and the Assyrians destroyed the northern kingdom; took the people off to captivity; and, they knew why. And you would have thought," God said, "that Judah would have learned the lesson and said, 'Wait a minute. Do we want that to happen to us?'" But God said, "No, she played the harlot also."

Verse 9: "And it came about, because of the lightness of her harlotry, that she polluted the land, and committed adultery with stones and trees. Yet, in spite of all this, her treacherous sister, Judah, did not return to Me with all her heart, but rather, in deception, declares the Lord."

**Sexual Immorality**

This is a very significant point. Sexual immorality pollutes a country, and pollutes a society, and this is the first major step to the destruction of a nation. Historically, nations are destroyed who have violated the sexual moral code of Scripture – sex outside of marriage. Once that happens, the nation is on the way down. You can see where we are in the United States today.

Jeremiah 3:20 says this: "'Surely as a woman treacherously departs from her lover, so you have no treacherously with Me, O house of Israel,' declares the Lord.

In Jeremiah 31:32, we again have this concept that here is a woman who has been unfaithful to her husband, God: "'Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. My covenant, which they broke, although I was a husband to them,' declares the Lord."

Here He goes on and says, "I'm going to pick up this people, and bring them back to Me, and I'm going to have a new covenant where I will change their hearts so that they will no longer be attracted to the sin of the pagan idol gods and the nations around them.

So, here in Revelation 12, during the tribulation, God is beginning to restore this adulterous wife, Israel. But when we see her in her image out in space, John sees that she is still suffering. She is in agony. She is under intense persecution, of course, by the antichrist, and she is still suffering because of her rejection of her Messiah. She is identified as the one who has given birth to the Messiah in verse 2. So, we know her specific relationship.

**Satan Wants to Destroy the Jews**

Well, Satan, as you know, is still trying to destroy the Jewish people to prevent God from fulfilling the Abrahamic covenant with them. Satan has done this all along throughout history. He heard that statement in Genesis 3:15: "I'm going to bring a seed" (not plural, but one single seed. Paul pointed that out in Galatians: "Through the line of the woman who will be the Savior of the world, and He's going to defeat you, Satan. He is going to crush your head. You're going to be mortally destroyed." That happened on the cross. Satan throughout the ages, once he got that information, said, "I've got to stop this." When he saw Abraham selected as a special nation, Satan knew what he had to do: get rid of the Jews; and, bring them under destruction at every point that he can. Throughout history, this is what he's been doing.

In Genesis 6, you'll remember, that the demons had sexual relations with human women, and produced a hybrid species. The Bible calls them "men of renown." These giants filled the earth before the flood of Noah. They were half-breeds: half-angel; and, half-human. And Satan came within an inch (a fraction) of destroying humanity, because everybody was now diluted: half-demon; and, half-human. If he could have gotten just eight more people, he would have succeeded. Noah and his family apparently were all that were left. If he could have brought those eight into a demonic relationship, it would have been impossible for God to bring a true human Savior. There would be no humanity for him to come through. But God frustrated that brought, and brought on the flood.

Haman, in the time of Esther, had the Persian king sign a decree that on a certain day throughout this world empire, you were now authorized to kill every Jew on the spot. You could kill every Jew and take his possessions. And everybody was gearing up, getting their weapons ready. They had their targets picked. And then Esther convinced the king to sign another decree. And for the Medes and the Persians, once you put something into a law, it could never be changed. The same thing happens in Washington now. No matter how dumb it is, once it has been passed into law, it stays forever. In Washington, they operate on the principle of the Medes and the Persians, as you well know. But Esther got him to sign another decree to say that if a Jew was attacked in the Persian Empire, he could kill his attacker. Well, that certainly changed things. If he had not done that, they would have wiped out, practically (and probably), the whole Jewish race.

In the time of Athaliah (of Ahab and Jezebel), she had such an enragement over the destruction of the Ball worship, and of the end of the destruction of her daughter Jezebel. She went through the house of David, and killed every one of her grandsons. She ordered them killed, and had them slaughtered. These kids, these male children, were the only way that God could fulfill His promise of a Savior through the line of David from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But one little boy was hidden, and they did not kill him. And the line was there with this one little kid, and they preserved his life, and then brought him out at an appropriate time. And when Athaliah saw that, she went bananas, and she went to kill him, and they killed her. This boy was preserved to adulthood; to be married; to produce the children; and, to expand the line through which Christ would come.

Who did that? It was Satan that was doing this. This is the picture that John sees of this poor nation. The Jews were always under attack, and always under the hand of somebody's destruction. This woman is pictured here suffering in this way.

When Jesus was born, what did Herod do? Herod is an Edomite. Herod comes from the line of Esau, the Arab line. He hears about a king of the Jews. He hates the Jews, even though he's the king. What does he do? He puts out the order, when the wise men come along, to kill every male baby in the kingdom who is two-years-old and under, because that way he would get the Christ child. But God had already moved them to the safety of Egypt.

Throughout history, the Jewish people have been under attack, and Jesus Christ has been under attack. Finally, on the day of the crucifixion, Satan breathed a sigh of relief. He finally saw his archenemy, the God-man, put on the cross and murdered. He felt he had won. The poor ding-a-ling! He did not realize that what had happened was his final defeat, because on Easter Sunday morning, that Savior arose, thereby declaring to all mankind that the way indeed into the holy of holies was open, as was signified by the tearing of the veil in the temple, and anybody could come to God. Sin was no longer an issue – nobody's sin. The only issue was: Are you willing to take this sacrifice in your behalf, or are you going to be bound and determined to pay for your own sins in the lake of fire forever? Which do you want to do?

So, this is the picture here. A woman is under attack. A woman with child is crying out in her labor pains as she is struggling to give birth to this child. As we will see later on, the child, indeed, that was born through this nation was, of course, none other than Jesus Christ. That's the description that we have in Matthew 1:18. This woman is fulfilling what John sees that she is to do – provide the Savior of mankind. The birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: "When His mother, Mary, had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together (that is, before any sexual contact had been made), she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit." Thus, He did not have a sin nature (not having a human father's sperm in his genetic structure): "And Joseph, her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly." Joseph thought that she had been unfaithful to him, and he was simply going to quietly break off the engagement.

"But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins.'" This is just exactly what God promised Abraham that He would do: "All this took place that that which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child; shall bear a son; and, they shall call His name Emmanuel' (which translated means 'God with us').

"So, Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took her as his wife, and kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a son, and he called His name Jesus."

The birth of Jesus Christ is from the nation Israel. This woman represents Israel – this woman whom Satan has been trying to destroy. You may consult Isaiah 9:6, Micah 5:2-3, and Romans 9:3-5, all of which state explicitly that Christ was born from the Jewish people.

In the midst of Israel's centuries of suffering, because of their unfaithfulness to God, is born Jesus Christ the Savior King. This nation indeed has been a nation which has agonized under enormous suffering. The suffering of Israel, however, has been, on the one hand, self-imposed. As far back as the days of Moses, one of the last things Moses did under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was that he warned these people that they would have enormous personal suffering if they violated the doctrines that they had been taught – this which represented the ways of God.

In Deuteronomy 28:58, Moses was almost through with his final book here. The revelation that God had given to him was almost complete. He has this to say: "If you are not careful to observe all the words of this Law, which are written in this book (doctrine), to fear this honored and awesome name, the Lord your God, then the Lord will bring extraordinary plagues on you and your descendants, even severe and lasting plagues, and miserable and chronic diseases. And he will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. Also, every sickness and every plague, which is not written in this Law, the Lord will bring on you until you are destroyed."

God said, "If you disobey My words; the lifestyle that I provided you; and, the moral standard that I call upon you as my chosen people to live, I will destroy you physically. I will bring every corrosive, destructive, painful disease that you have seen in other people, and I'll plant it right on you, and you will die. I will destroy those who disobey the Word of God. Then you shall be left few in number (but never wiped out), whereas you were as the stars of heaven for multitude, because you did not obey the Lord, your God. And it shall come about that as the Lord delighted over you to prosper you, and multiply you, so the Lord will delight over you to make you perish and destroy you. And you shall be torn from the land where you are entering to possess it."

This was the great thing that the Jews looked forward to: "Finally, we're getting into the Promised Land. Finally, we're going to enjoy the good life." Moses says, "Yes, you are. I can't do it, because you made me so mad, that time at the rock, that I struck it again instead of speaking to it, and thus violated the symbol of striking Christ twice to produce the water of life. But," he said, "I've stood up on the mountain; I've looked across the valley; I've seen the Jordan River; and, I've seen the Promised Land. I'm not going in, but you are. And I'm going to tell you something: You're going to go in there to die. You're going to go into prosperity like you can't imagine. If you're going to act a fool, and forget who is giving you this prosperity, and why He has given it to you, He's going to jerk you right out of it by your hair roots. He says, 'I'm going to slap so many diseases upon you, you won't believe it, and you will die like flies. And where I would have enjoyed prospering you, had you used what I gave you for God's glory, My justice will demand bringing judgment upon you.'" Is there a lesson for us to learn here?

Verse 64: "Moreover, the Lord will scatter you among the peoples from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth. And there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you and your fathers have not known." Oh, how they loved idolatry! How they love to worship the idols! And God says, "Do you want to worship idols? Fine. I'm going to scatter you throughout the pagan nations who worship these idol gods, and you can worship them to your heart's content."

Verse 65: "And among those nations, you shall find no rest, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot. But there the Lord will give you a trembling heart; failing of eyes; and, despair of soul. So, your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall be in the dread night and day; and, shall have no assurance of your life. In the morning, you shall say, 'Would that it were evening;' and, in the evening, you shall say, 'Would that it were morning,' because of the dread of your heart, which you dread, and of the sight of your eyes, which you shall see." What a future! This was just because they would not obey the Word of God.

Well, what do you think Satan did? Satan constantly promoted idolatry. Satan constantly promoted sexual immorality among the Jewish people. Satan promoted every violation of the Word of God. For what reason? Because he wanted God to discipline the Jewish people. He hoped that God would kill them all, because if the Jews were wiped out, Satan was forever safe. The Jews historically insulted God by worshiping their pagan idols, and Satan hoped that this would be their final destruction. Today, the Jewish people are again (as John saw this woman) in great suffering; great fear; and, great agony.

Who could have believed, just a short two weeks ago, that a crazy idiot in Iraq named Saddam Hussein and the president of the greatest nation on the face of the earth named George Bush, would have ganged up together to pass a condemnation in the United Nations against the Jews, and have turned against their ancient ally. The United States is taking a major role because we are so involved with Israel's enemies, the Arabs, now, that we have to keep these guys happy. We can no longer tell them when they rage against us because we have been fair, and considerate, and loving to the people of God, even in their disobedience, because they are still the people of God. We've always been Israel's friend. We have told the Arabs, "Hang it on your nose" when they have risen in their indignation. But we're not doing it now. We are joining them. Who would have thought that Saddam could have achieved that? Remember that he is after the Jew. He's out to kill the Jews.

Well, it is hard to imagine how a people with divine warnings could have followed the course that Israel did, to bring on the self-imposed suffering that John sees in this woman. The book of Jeremiah is one of the all-time great classics of a nation who has full spiritual enlightenment, turning its back upon that source of truth, and carrying on to its own miserable self-destruction.

In the next session, we will look at the sufferings that Israel has brought about, which are described for us in the book of Jeremiah, and then, lo and behold, the sufferings brought against Israel by Christians themselves. How could Adolf Hitler have stand up and quoted Martin Luther in order to prove that, when he was exterminating the Jews in his death camps, and said, "I am doing the work of the Lord?" Did you know that he said that? At the Nuremberg trials, how could Streicher, who was in charge of these camps and of this death activity, quote Martin Luther in his defense to destroy the Jewish people?

Next time, we will look at the sufferings, of all things, that Satan has brought against this woman from within the Christian community itself. And before our eyes, our nation is going down that road of its own self-destruction because what God said in Genesis 12:3 is still true today: "If you put your hand out against My earthly people, the Jews, you are bringing destruction against yourself."

Dr. John E. Danish, 1990

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