

## Supplement to XVIII, XIX & XX

### Cycle 4: Satan's kingdom at war with God

Cycle 4 starts a completely different scene. The visions continue to progress, but shift in perspective. Where we saw the Lamb open the scroll of redemptive history in 6-11, we now see the spiritual war between the Lamb and Satan, along with the false religions that Satan has generated. This war followed the ascension as the church began. The focus of the visions shifts more towards the time of the church, away from the time before the Messiah.

Ch 12 opens with a summary. Most commentators agree the imagery allows us to interpret the woman as the nation of Israel, the child as the Messiah and the dragon as Satan. Verses 1-6 summarize the struggle of the nation of Israel to survive, with the ultimate goal to bring forth the Messiah. This happens and he is "caught up to God" at the ascension. Being frustrated, the only remaining tactic Satan has is to make war on the church, her "offspring". Satan's war is futile, because vs 11 promises that we will conquer him with the blood of the lamb and word of our testimony. The timing of the war in heaven is difficult to pinpoint. Some say it was before the Garden of Eden. Some say it was after the ascension. It may have been when Jesus was born and the final plan of redemption was understood by Satan.

Jesus said he saw Satan fall like lightning Luke 10:18 when he commissions the disciples to have authority over the enemy.

John records Jesus statement about Satan being cast out: John 12:23... "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ...28... Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." 29 The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." 30 Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. 31 Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. 32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

Ch 13 moves into John's time, post resurrection and ascension. There are 3 players here, the unholy Trinity:

1. Dragon: Satan (False Father)
2. Beast of the Sea: Brought worship to the Dragon (False Christ)
3. Beast of the Land: Makes signs and wonders so followers worship the first Beast (False Spirit, also the False Prophet or the spirit of anti-Christ from 1 John 4:3)

Notice nowhere is mentioned the name Anti-Christ. Revelation does not contain that word!

This scene represents the creation of the false religions of the world. Notice the focus is to get humans to shift worship from God to something else. This is the point of Satan in Eden and in Tempting Jesus in the wilderness.

666: Letters in Hebrew and Greek had numerical values. Scholars agree that the number represents a man, however which man is unknown. Both Greek and Hebrew have numeric values. In fact there are Greek manuscript fragments that have 616 in vs. 18, your Bible may have a note to that effect. Also, remember that 6 is the number of man, being created on the 6<sup>th</sup> day. Three 6's would be the complete representation of men.

Nero Caesar is 616 in Greek and 666 in Hebrew. The early date of Revelation makes Nero the clear choice. Domitian printed coins with his name on them, and that name works out to be 616 in Greek and 666 in Hebrew. The late date of Revelation supports Domitian. Many other people in history have been associated with the "beast", up to the modern age. This supports the idea that the spirit of anti-christ is a persistent force, not a one-time event. My interpretation is that the Beast and 666 points to Nero in particular, but also represents all of the world religions and systems of government that take the focus off God and place it on themselves. John's readers would see Nero clearly in the image.

Ch 14 offers hope that in spite of of ungodly religions, the True God will reign. Our call is to persevere (14:12). God provides the gospel message. The Gospel will withstand all onslaughts of false religion (Matt 16:18).

The end of this cycle is the harvest of the earth. This is what Jesus spoke of in the parable in Matt 13:39-43.

### Cycle 5: Judgment on the earth because of False Religions

In spite of seeing wicked prosper, in the spiritual realm, God will judge all those who will oppose him.

Ch 15 starts with a reminder of Exodus 15, the victory song of Moses as God defeats Egypt at the Red Sea. This is an intentional reminder to us that God is the same God who has defeated evil nations all through history. John sees the sanctuary of the tent in v. 5 to reinforce that God is coming out of his sanctuary to judge as he did at the Red Sea. The angels are clothed like Jesus in Ch. 1, possibly signifying they are operating under direction from God

Ch 16 is a replay of the Egyptian judgment covered earlier. It also refers back to Ezekiel 9:1-10:6 when God promises the protection of His people as he judges Jerusalem. The trumpets were symbolic of warnings, affecting only part of the earth. The bowls are figuratively the actual judgments, affecting everyone.

This is the chapter where Armageddon is mentioned. This is either a symbolic reference to all of the times in the past when the world has been at war with God's people, or some event that may happen in the future. The connectivity symbolically of God's judgments on the ungodly through history is the key point to remember:

Sodom → Egypt → Babylon → Rome → All Future Kingdoms

The word Armageddon is translated from the Greek that is har-megiddon, meaning the hill of Megiddo. There is no mountain or hill as such on the plains of Megiddo, so it is difficult to know what this means. It is more likely a reference to Judges 4 and 5 when Israel faced a hopeless situation on the plains of Megiddo and Deborah saved them. Zechariah mentions it in 12:11 as a place of mourning. Josiah was killed by Pharaoh Neco here (2 Ki. 23), so it is associate with battles.

It is interesting that the battle of Armageddon never really happens. The 7<sup>th</sup> bowl is poured out before the battle takes place. This "battle" is also referenced in 19:19 and 20:8. The scene is reminiscent of 2 Kings 6:15-17 where Elisha shows the servant the spiritual side of a seemingly hopeless battle. In summary this battle is most likely a spiritual representation of the reality that the forces of Satan's rebellion wage war against the Kingdom of God, only in futility.

### **Cycle 6: Judgment on the kings of the earth**

As the cycles move more into the final judgments of God, Cycle 6 picks up as a focus on the judgment of false kings and the religions that they are "married" to. The imagery of the Great Whore of Babylon is used to describe the harlotry of the kings of the earth with Satan. The Great Whore or Prostitute is the False Bride of Christ. This is the false church or church of the state that works in similar fashion to the real Church. This is the physical manifestation of the kingdom of Satan on the earth. Just as in Ch 12, the followers of Satan pursue the people of Christ.

The idea of sexual immorality is synonymous with idolatry in the OT. She is associated with Rome in 17:9 going back to the 6<sup>th</sup> king being Nero in the Early Date model. The end result is in 17:14.

The beasts mimic the true religion, noted by a false "resurrection" in 17:8. There was actually a rumor in Rome that Nero had risen from the dead, prompting some to seek after him as god. This ties into the early date model.

Ch 18 Babylon is judged. The wrath of God will eventually pour out on all of those who have opposed him. The hope is in 18:4 where God calls his people out of Babylon. We will not be judged for living with her. Ch 18 is a soup full of OT prophesy references to God judging the nations who strove against Israel. It is a reminder of the faithfulness of God to preserve and protect his people, and the warning that those opposed to Him will fall.

Ch 18 is really a victory song of the saints over the judgment of Babylon. Kings will weep (v. 9). Businessmen will weep (v. 11). Those who profit from earthly trade and wealth will weep (v. 19). However God's people will Rejoice over the destruction of their enemies (v. 20).

Ch 19 is an extension of the celebration by the saints of God. It is a beautiful and wonderful visual image of Christ conquering the enemies of his people while we all look on. The Bride of Christ is finally delivered to the Bridegroom. Christ emerges as victor. A picture of the final judgment is given in v. 19-21. This is an image, not a literal picture of the destruction of the earth as many would interpret. The "great war" of Ch 16 is Christ's victory over the rulers of the world in a spiritual battle. This will culminate in the physical destruction of the kingdoms of the earth at the last Judgment.

There is a parallel between the great Marriage Supper of the Lamb (v. 7) and the great supper of God (v. 17). The saints (all believers) will fellowship with God to rejoice in the final victory of the kingdom of Christ. However the kingdoms of the earth will be the food for the feast of vultures that gorge themselves on the failed kingdoms of man.

Ch 18 and 19 also point back to Daniel 7. This is Daniel's vision of beasts at war with God and God's eventual victory over them. Daniel had in mind Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome being delivered to Jesus as the king when he came the first time. John's imagery is a completion of Daniel's vision in that all of the kingdoms of the earth are delivered to Jesus at his Second coming. Daniel's vision gives hope to Israel while exiled in Babylon. John continues to use that same imagery later in Revelation to give hope to us while we are in "Babylon".