

~Other Speakers S-Z: David Servant:

This chapter could be called "a short history of the devil in relationship to Israel." What we've just read certainly doesn't fit well into any assumed chronological order within the book of Revelation, as it begins with a vision of the birth of Jesus.

The unnamed woman to whom we are first introduced, and from whom Christ comes, can only represent Israel, and the 12 stars on her head must represent Israel's 12 tribes. Her child is portrayed in 12:5 as the One who will rule all the nations with a rod of iron, who is unquestionably Christ (Ps. 2:9; Rev. 2:27; 19:15). He is also seen as being caught up to the throne of God, which is what happened at Christ's ascension. Satan is unquestionably portrayed as a dragon, who attempts to kill Jesus at His birth, which we know he attempted through Herod's slaughter of the Bethlehem babes. Satan is also portrayed as "the accuser of the brethren" (12:10) and as a persecutor of Israel (12:13, 17).

The dragon's seven heads and ten horns must represent end-times governments and political leaders over whom he will hold sway. His tail sweeping away a third of the stars in heaven and throwing them to earth may represent a third of the angels joining Satan's original rebellion against God. This is, however, speculative.

We also read today of Satan being expelled from heaven and cast down to earth, and it can't be a reference to his original expulsion because he is spoken of being cast down as "the accuser of the brethren." There were no brethren to accuse when he was originally expelled. Additionally, when Satan finds himself on the earth, he persecutes the descendants of Israel, which also didn't exist when he was originally cast out of heaven. Also take note that when Satan is cast down to the earth, we are told that he has "great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time" (12:12), one more indication that we are reading about a future expulsion. It seems safe to conclude that Satan has had some access to heaven even after his pre-Adamic rebellion and expulsion according to certain scriptures (Job 1:6, 2:2; Zech. 3:1-2; Luke 22:31-32). Satan's accusing of the brethren before God "night and day" (12:10) also points to his current access to heaven.

The devil has certainly persecuted the descendants of Israel down through the centuries, and after his future expulsion from heaven he will apparently specifically target them again (12:13). However, twice in this chapter we learn that at least some of Israel's descendants will be given divine assistance to "flee to the wilderness," where they will find safe haven for 1,260 days, a span of time that is also described by John in today's reading as "a time and times and half a time" (12:6, 14). That identical expression is found in Daniel 7:25 and 12:7, and Daniel was told that it was the length of time that the saints would be given into the hands of the antichrist. So we can say with certainty that "a time and times and half a time" is one year, two years, and half a year, or a total of three-and-a-half years, which is the identical length of time that Jerusalem will be trodden underfoot by the nations (11:2) and the length of the two witnesses' prophetic ministry in Jerusalem (11:3). Interesting stuff!

Perhaps Israel's fleeing to the wilderness corresponds to Jesus' warning to His followers that they should "flee to the mountains" when they see the "abomination of desolation" standing in the holy place, that is, when the antichrist sets himself up in the temple as being God (Matt. 24:15-18). Jesus said that event would mark the beginning of a "great tribulation" (Matt. 24:21).

Will there be believers on the earth during Satan's end times persecution of Israel? There will definitely be believing Jews then, as some are spoken of as "the rest of [the woman's] children, who keep the commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus" (12:17).