

A Woman, A Dragon, and Their Seed

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Date: 20 January 2016

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[0 : 00] Almighty God and loving Father, I pray tonight and we pray tonight that the words that I speak might be from your words and faithful to it. May you graft your word into our hearts and work in us so as to bring forth in us the fruit of good works.

And we pray this for the honor and praise of your name through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. OK, well, we don't know how he got there, but there he is. And mysteriously, he appears into this idyllic garden, a serpent, a serpent with a mouth that lies and deceives an opponent to God, a liar about God.

And the two humans cave in a first. Then she's joined by her husband and together they sin. And God acts as he must in his punishment.

He turns first to the serpent and he promises curse. He promises enmity between the serpent and the woman, between his offspring and their and hers. He promises some male offspring, some male offspring of Eve will crush the head of the serpent's offspring, even if the offspring of the serpent strikes his heel.

And so begins the story in the Bible of two lines, two offspring, two ends, but one certain victory. And today I want you to listen as we work through this passage in Revelation or these passages in Revelation.

[1 : 23] I want you to listen for the echoes of the garden and the serpent and the woman in our passage. The book of Revelation and these chapters in particular have them. It knows about the garden, you see.

It knows about the serpent and it knows about the woman who will bear a male child. So listen for those signs tonight, not just in chapter 12, but in the chapters that follow. And watch things come together and watch God execute his curse and promise.

And I'll point out some of the connections as we go. Others I'll just leave you to find yourself. So I've told you what to look for. I want you to have your eyes and your ears open as we work through the text. To begin, let's do what we've done almost every week.

And this is just to reorient ourselves. Let's summarize where we've been so far. So far in John's letter to us, he has told us of two in the spirit experiences.

Let me show you. Open your Bibles to Revelation chapter 1 verse 10. Revelation 1 verse 10. John tells us that he was in the spirit on the Lord's day.

[2 : 26] And as you remember, on that occasion, he was given instructions to write what he sees and to send it to the churches. That's the focus of chapters 2 and 3. Now flip over to chapter 4.

In chapter 4 verse 1, John sees a door open in heaven. He hears a loud voice speaking like a trumpet. And the voice says, come up here and I will show you what must take place after this. Then in verse 2, John tells us about his second in the spirit experience. He says, at once I was in the spirit. And there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.

This in the spirit experience involves some key events. First, you'll remember in chapter 4, there is a revelation of God on his throne. Then in chapter 5, there is a revelation of the standing slain lamb. Then we have a revelation of the seven seals, which leads to seven trumpets, which includes seven thunders. Now we weren't allowed to hear what was revealed in those seven thunders last week.

[3 : 31] We were just told about them last Sunday. By the way, there was a small error in the diagram I gave you the other night. And so I've amended it and included it with the outline that you have now.

So let me just show it to you. You might have that diagram in front of you. Put it in color for you.

Take a look at Revelation 8 verse 1. So have the diagram there. Have Revelation 8 verse 1 in front of you.

Now you will see that the seven trumpets don't have an interlude between the sixth and the seventh trumpet, as my previous diagram indicated. Rather, they come as a result of the opening of the seventh seal.

Let's now flip to the next part of the diagram. My own view is, sorry, let's flip to the next in the spirit experience, which happens in verse 19 of chapter 11.

So flip in your Bibles to chapter 11 and verse 19. Actually, we'll go to verse 15. The seventh angel sounds the seventh trumpet, and as soon as it sounds, we hear a transfer of kingship.

[4 : 33] Can you see this? This is the picture of the end time. At the end of time, the kingship of the world is transferred from the world to the Lord and his Messiah, that is, his Christ.

And then he will reign forever and ever. So that is a sign of the end of time, as it were. We find ourselves back in the throne room that we were in, in chapter 4 and 5. The 24 elders are there in these verses, and they fall on their faces.

They worship God. Notably, they don't specify whether the he that will reign is the Lord or his Messiah. Why would that be? Because the two are so bound together, you might as well just have a singular to announce the two together.

And that's what's going on here. They are bound together as God. Anyway, the 24 elders acknowledge that the time has come, and that time is a time for the judging of the dead.

A time for the rewarding of the servants of God, the prophets. A time for rewarding God's people who revered his name, both great and small. And a time for destroying those who destroyed the earth.

[5 : 39] So we're beginning tonight with a judgment scene, and we will end tonight with a judgment scene. This is a climactic moment. It is the end of history as we know it.

And that leads us to verse 19. God's temple in heaven is open, verse 19. The Ark of the Covenant is seen again. The mark of God's presence among his people, that is the Ark of the Covenant.

The created order reflects the magnitude of what is going on, you see, because the created order has flashes of lightning, and rumblings, and peals of thunder, and an earthquake, and a severe hailstorm. It's though all of creation is saying, this is very, very important.

Now, John's next in the spirit experience will not happen until chapter 17, verse 1. And in between the end of chapter 11 and chapter 17, verse 1, there are three signs.

Let me show them to you. I want you to look at, now flip over to chapter 12, verse 1. 12, verse 1, we're told that a great sign appears in heaven. And that sign is a woman clothed with the sun.

[6 : 45] That's very quickly, verse 3, followed up by another sign. Here, the second sign is an enormous red dragon. Now flip over to chapter 15, verse 1.

We see another great and marvelous sign. Seven angels with the seven last plagues. Seven bowls. Now I've put all of this in my diagram, and here's where you might have the diagram open. Can you see it there? I've recorded the three signs in heaven. Signs 1 and 2 cover chapter 12 through to 14, verse 20.

And then sign 3 captures, takes the rest, that is chapters 15 and 16 effectively. And there's an introduction which introduces the woman, the dragon, and the woman's child.

That is that next section that we are dealing with. And after that, we will have the seven bowls. So John's second in the spirit experience runs from chapter 4 to the end of chapter 11. Then we get an interlude before he's next in the spirit experience.

[7 : 49] And in that interlude, we have these three signs. The first two signs firstly introduces to the woman, the dragon, and the woman's child. And then we get what I've called seven epic stories about those characters and the people related to them.

Okay? Seven epic stories about those characters and the people related to them. And together, they take up chapters 12 through to 14. At which point, we come to a third sign, which contains seven bowls.

That takes up chapters 15 and 16. So their friends is the big picture. I needed to do that so that you can understand some of the structuring that is going on within the book of Revelation. Undoubtedly, they'll be fine-tuning to my diagram as we go, because I haven't stolen it from anyone else.

I've created it myself. So it inevitably needs some fixing up as we go. But we'll see how we go. It'll give you some way, though, through the detail of what's going on. What we're going to do tonight is we are going to work our way through chapters 12, 13, and 14.

Let's get underway. Now, before we get to those epic, seven epic stories, we need to be introduced to our protagonists. That is, we need to be introduced to the major players in these epic stories that are about to unfold.

[9 : 02] So let's check them out. As I've indicated, our section today begins with two signs. First great sign, a sign of a woman. Verse 1 says, But that's not all we're told about her.

Verse 2 indicates that she's pregnant and about to give birth. She's caught up in the labor pains of birth and she's in deep agony. So we must ask ourselves, who is this woman? At first glance, we are naturally tempted to think of Mary who gave birth to Jesus.

Naturally. And undoubtedly, we're meant to think of that to some extent. Or we could think of other women in biblical history who struggled to give birth. Women such as Sarah or Hannah.

And I think we are meant to think of those women, not just of Mary, but of others who preceded her within the history of Israel. Key women in the history of Israel. But this passage is clear that it is not the identity of the woman that is important.

What is important is that crown of 12 stars. For the 12 stars represent the people of God. They encapsulate all of God's people who long for God's purposes to be fulfilled.

[10 : 22] And therefore, whose longings are caught up in this woman about to give birth. Their struggle, their pain, the pain of the people of God is the pain of the struggle of all pious people of God throughout history.

And they watch on at this woman with 12 stars. Waiting to see what will happen. And in verse 3, we're introduced to the second sign.

And this sign is an awesomely terrifying one. One of this great red dragon. Verse 3 says that he has seven heads. Ten horns.

On each of the heads, there's a diadem or a crown. So he's well and truly crowned himself. The seven heads and the seven crowns are representative. You see, seven is God's number.

Heads represent wisdom. Crowns represent power and rule. Here is a beast who has pretensions to divine wisdom and power and rule.

[11 : 19] This is a beast of terrifying proportions. That's made clear in verse 4 when we hear that his tail alone is capable of sweeping away a third of the stars of heaven and casting them to the ground.

This is no backyard idol. This is a person, a figure of enormous pretension and power.

So who is this great red dragon? Well, he obviously is the enemy of the people of God. But he's also the enemy of God himself. Look at verse 9. There his identity is spelled out for us.

The dragon is the serpent of Genesis 3. The one who's called the devil. Satan, the deceiver of the world. You see, our introduction to the protagonist continues in the second half of verse 4.

For the pregnant woman and the great red dragon are thrown down to the earth in a terrible cosmic conflict. And I want you to notice the focus of the conflict. On the first level, it's the child, isn't it?

[12 : 23] Okay, the child is the object of their, or the focus of them. The dragon seeks to devour the child. But that's not the full story. You see, fundamentally the conflict is about the purposes of God in his world.

That, I think, is what is going on here. You see, because the purposes of God in his world is tied up with the seed of the woman. And that's what serpent, the serpent wants to get at.

That's what's going on here. God has a purpose for his world. His purpose is tied up with this woman, this child, the seed of the woman. And Satan sets himself against that purpose, just as he has always done from the garden on.

And he seeks to stop it, to devour it, to obliterate it. The next thing I want you to notice is about the conflict is its location. Our passage makes clear that it occurs in two places.

On the one hand, it occurs on earth. On earth, you see, Satan sends his human representatives, such as Herod and Jewish authorities, or the Roman rulers, or even the disciples of Jesus, to head people off.

[13 : 30] They try to thwart the purposes of God. Even Peter himself tries to do it. Herod might try and do it by trying to kill a child, every child under two in a particular location.

The religious authorities might do it out of jealousy over the success of Jesus. The Romans might crucify Jesus to appease religious authorities. The disciples might do it by attempting to turn Jesus away from the path of the cross.

So on the one hand, the conflict occurs with very real people in very real historical situations. But as real as these people and situations look, there is a deeper reality that is going on here with these figures.

And this passage lets us into that deeper reality. You see, it shows us that behind the scenes, or behind these people and these situations, stands an eternal reality.

Behind them, behind the people trying to thwart the purposes of God, there is a cosmic conflict in heaven itself, between the people of God and the devil. Between Satan and God himself.

[14:37] Now look at verse 5. Verse 5 tells us the conflict finds a particular focus in one place. One person, this child. The male child is clearly Jesus. He is one who is to rule all the nations of the earth.

Verse 5. Just as God promised David and his descendants in Psalm 2. He is the one who has been the focus of God's great purposes from before history began. Now look at the second half of verse 5.

We are told that this child will be snatched up or caught up to God and his throne. Now that could be a reference to the resurrection of Jesus and the vindication of Jesus by being raised.

But I think it is probably a reference to the ascension and enthronement of the Messiah. The Christ. The descendant of David. At the right hand of God.

Now later we will be told that this will happen after he accomplishes his great purpose. However not at the moment. At the moment the focus falls on his absence.

[15:38] And it falls on the woman. In verse 6. She is sheltered in the wilderness for 1260 days. Now do you remember that figure from last week? Do you remember the 1260 days?

1260 days is half of seven years. That is it is a full time cut short. In my view this time is the time between the ascension of Jesus and the time of his return.

That is the 1260 days is in my view the whole of the history from the time Jesus ascends to the time he returns again. It could be longer but it's a time cut short.

I want you to notice the place of protection is the wilderness. Do you remember the story of the wilderness? There are two wilderness experiences in the Old Testament. The one that happens after the exodus and before the golden calf incident or before the giving of the law even.

So in between the exodus out of Egypt and the giving of the law in Exodus 19. Is that wonderful wilderness experience. Where Israel is protected by God as they wander through the wilderness.

[16:44] Oh they do sin. They are tested and tempted. But the Lord protects them. And he's not strong in his judgments as he is after he gives the Ten Commandments.

Friends these are truths I want you to grasp from this introductory segment. If we are Christians.

We are in the time between the ascension of Jesus Christ. And his return.

He has already been made. King. He has already. He is already at the right hand of the father. But he will return to earth.

He will return to rule. And to judge. If we are Christians in this time in between time as we are. Then we are in a time of testing.

Friends we don't have to wait for some future time that's going to come when it'll be really bad. No we're in the time of testing now. That means that the Christian life will be faced with constant testing.

[17:44] A constant need for us to stand firm. Which explains the exhortations given in the New Testament. Which explains the fact that in the New Testament Christians are almost invariably suffering. A constant need to overcome.

To be victorious. But it's also a time when we are under. Wonderfully under the nurture. And care. And protection of God. Both are true.

A time of testing. But a time of protection. What's more. The days of this time are limited. They will not go on forever. So there are the protagonists. There's the context.

Now let's look at this first epic story. It's the story that has the great red dragon as its focus. It's a story recounted in verses 7 to 12. Look at it with me. First thing to notice.

Is that we shift focus back to the heavenly realm. And there we meet Michael. The archangel who features in Daniel chapter 10. He and his angelic host engage with the great red dragon in the heavenly realms.

[18:46] The dragon puts up a fight. But it's not good enough. And as a result. The dragon and his host are thrown down to earth.

Now in my view. This is a behind the scenes view. Of what is accomplished. In the ministry and work of Christ. So as Christ dies on the cross.

Satan is being cast down. As his victory is pronounced. Satan is cast out. You see in parts of the Old Testament. You might remember. We hear of Satan appearing in the heavenly places.

To accuse people before God. Do you remember that? Do you remember that with Job? Not anymore. No. Now he's been hurled down to earth. However.

There he does what he does. And it's in verse 9. What he does. He leads astray. It's there in verse 15 as well. He spews things out of his mouth. I think.

[19 : 42] Perhaps implying heresies. It's also there in verse 10. He accuses the saints. Anyway. Verses 10 to 12 contain God's overriding pronouncement. The dragon.

This serpent. The devil. Satan. Is cast down. And his power curtailed. But did you notice the warning note in verse 12. Although he's defeated in heaven.

He is still active on earth. And he is aggressive. And furious. For he knows that his time is short. You might not think it's short when you know.

Thousands of years have passed. But he knows it's short. In the grand scheme of things. Friends. That is the story of the great red dragon. You see.

Friends. The world we live in is a place of strife. And testing. And temptation. If we are Christians. But he is defeated. However. He has not yet been removed from all his influence.

[20 : 40] He still marauds around us. Peter says. Like a lion. Seeking people to devour. Friends. That is the world we live in. And it's very important that we do not forget this eternal reality.

Satan and his cohort. Wander the world. Strategically working their subtle deceptions. He is desperate. He is hateful. His purpose is to destroy the Christian church.

The progeny. Of the one who cast him out of heaven. He will use any means he can. But as this passage shows us. Well actually I should go back.

He is not the progeny. He is the son of. Which is not the same. He has two particular areas. In which you will find him. These are the areas you will find the activity of the evil one. First he can be found in deception.

Particularly in false religion. False wisdom. False prophecy. Such as are rampant in our world. Using all means even the most technologically sophisticated ones.

[21 : 43] I for my part wonder whether one of them is internet and pornography. It cripples and maims young person after young person. It spoils marriage after marriage.

It drags people away from devotion to Jesus and into blind alleys and destroyed discipleship. The same could be said of things such as computer gaming. I constantly see people with no time for Jesus.

No time to battle with the devil. No background to battle with the devil. Because they have no time to read their Bibles. Because they are battling digital enemies online. The lifeblood is being sucked out of their faith.

The second focus for the devil is listed here as well. It is what? Accusation. The devil catches us between the word of God and his word of accusation. And if our hearts and minds are empty of the word of God, he will have a field day.

Friends, take in this word. You see, the devil is not a quiet mouse. Retiring. Non-aggressive. No, he is a blood red dragon.

[22 : 53] Seeking someone to devour. And if you are Christian, he has you in his sights. However, do not despair. For he can be overcome by what?

Do you see it in the passage? He can be overcome by the word of testimony and the blood of the lamb. So love not your lives so much, friends.

Rather, love your saviour. Love the lamb. Love the gospel, the word of God. Love testifying about this Jesus. Love his word of scripture, which tells you the gospel and which will protect you from the evil one.

As you know, it's content. Let's move on, though, with a little more speed now. Let's turn to our next epic story. Verses 13 to 20. It is the story of the woman and her progeny.

Friends, the background to this story is the one you've already heard. You see, having failed to destroy the Christ, Satan tries to destroy his people. And that's his focus. If accusation fails, though, he has another weapon.

[23 : 56] We'll see it more in later chapters. But it's outlined here. Can you see what it is? It is deceit. Look at verse 15. The dragon uses his mouth, even as God uses his word.

But the mouth of the dragon spews out false water. But there's a delightful irony. Can you see it there? God, the creator, who created the earth, causes the mouth of the earth to open up and swallow what the devil has spewed out.

But verse 17 tells us that's not the end of his wiles. He will wage war against the rest of the offspring of the woman. And as we'll see, that war will have additional arsenals added to it.

And key among them will be persecution. Let's now turn to Epic Story 3, chapter 13, verses 1 to 10. Friends, for Jews, the sea, I think probably because they were largely landlubbers, the sea was a place of dark, chaotic waters and strange and fearsome creatures.

They had an immense respect for people who went out on the sea in ships because they were scared to do it themselves. Because in the sea, they felt there were just, you know, awesome, chaotic things going on.

[25 : 07] So if you wanted to talk to someone about something really terrifying and you're speaking to a Jew, you talk about something arising out of deep, dark, chaotic, chaotic waters of the sea.

Daniel 7 does exactly that. It is the place in scripture that talked about beasts arising out of the sea with terrifying, persecuting power.

And so as read of scripture, we know what to expect in chapter 13, verse 1, when we see a malevolent dragon standing at the sea, meeting a beast, which is coming from the sea.

We know this is terrifying. For this beast combines all of the four, the features of the four kingdoms mentioned in Daniel 7, including the number four one, which is the worst.

And I want you to notice some other things about this beast. Look at verse 2. He is delegated power and throne and authority by the dragon. Now look at verse 3. He has a fatal wound that has been healed.

[26 : 11] Now verses 3 and 4 together. People are filled with wonder and follow him. They worship the dragon because of him.

They also then worship the beast himself. Verses 7 and 8. Notice that worship has come from every tribe and people and nation. That is from all around the world. But they bear his mark.

Look at verses 16 and 17. Now friends, did you hear the similarities in the characteristics that I showed you?

Did you see the similarities to Jesus in the beast from the sea? Did you hear them? The beast has mimicked the ministry and work of the Lord Jesus. He is a false messiah.

He is a counterfeit. Now let me say that in keeping with what I've already told you about apocalyptic. I'm not sure that we are speaking about just one of these. Now I think that there may even be one climactic one.

[27 : 12] The pattern of false messiahs. Although there might be one climactic one. The pattern of false messiahs will be found throughout history. That is the work of the devil. The subtle deceiver. He will do this time and time again in my view.

Even if there's a final climactic time. So as John tells us here. He who has ears to hear. Let him hear. By the way, did you notice that the false messiah persecutes the children of the true messiah? Look at verse 7. He has given power to wage war against the whole of God's holy people and to conquer them. And that power will look overwhelming. Friends, these are our brothers and sisters. If not people now in the world. Verse 10. If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity they will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword they will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God's people.

No kidding. Yet it's happening, friends. There's another element to add to the dragon and the beast from the sea. Look at verse 11. We're now into epic story 4.

[28 : 19] Another beast arises. Now do you notice this one's a bit different? Where did the first one come from? The sea. This one comes from the earth.

And like the first beast, I think that we're meant to notice what he does. So now think about where you see these characteristics elsewhere in the Bible. It looks like a lamb. It speaks like a dragon.

Verse 11. It exercises all the authority of the first beast on its behalf. It makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast whose fatal wound had been healed.

It performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven. Through signs it persuaded people. Verse 14. It was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast.

It forced all people to receive a mark. Verse 16. Now friends, think about in the Bible, who else does this? Who else does these sorts of things?

[29 : 21] Who glorifies the sun and leads us to worship him as Lord? Who performs signs and wonders as validation? Whose ministry is linked with fire coming down from heaven?

Who is the mechanism for sealing God's people? Surely the answer is clear. It's the Holy Spirit, isn't it? So in one sense, the first beast out of the sea mimicked Christ.

The second beast from the earth mimics who? The Holy Spirit. We now have Trinity. A false one. The second.

So when combined, the overarching source of the red with that overarching source of the red dragon, what do you have? A fake Trinity. A fake of the true God.

A mimicry of the true and living God. Friends, mimicking. What is of God? Masquerading as God. These are the marks of immense deceit.

[30 : 23] They are at the heart of Satan's work. They are so different from God's work. Which is full of what? Truth. Which leads to not slavery, but freedom.

Jesus warned about such mimicry and falsehood. He warned about many who would come claiming to be him and deceiving. He warned about false messiahs, false prophets performing signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

Mark 13, 5 to 6. Friends, when do these things occur? Well, again, as I've repeated a few times, no harm repeating it again, I think this is telling us general patterns and cycles that occur in God's world.

They might repeat themselves through history. They may, they have been around though, I think, since the death and resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus. They may intensify as we get closer and closer to the final coming of Jesus.

And the end. They may even climax in one particular heightened example of these patterns repeated at the end of time. However, did you notice again the reference to 1260 days?

[31 : 36] Chapter 12, verse 6. That's the same as time and times and half a time. Chapter 12, verse 14. And that's the same as 42 months. Chapter 13, verse 5.

It's the same time in which the church bears witness in chapter 11, verse 3. And all are the same way of saying this is a time cut short. It may even be a way of talking about the whole of the time between the death of Jesus and the end.

And if so, then the war on God's people will be a regular state of play from the death of Jesus to the end. Oh, it may have pinnacles and heightened moments. It may even have one escalated intense moment.

However, it is par for the course between the death of Jesus and the end of time. It's a life for believers in Jesus in a world where Satan, the great red dragon, has been thrown down to earth. He. He, Satan. Not the state. Not human powers or governments. He. The evil one is the great enemy. The one to fear. But if you are sealed, your destiny is secured.

[32 : 47] Now, friends, we'd better move on. Before we do, I should just mention two things. First, the mark of the beast is like the seal on the saints, isn't it? At its root, it is spiritual rather than physical.

It's not as though you go around with this mark on your forehead, right? That's not what really counts. Right? At its root, it's spiritual rather than physical. So don't go around looking for physical marks so that you can tell, as it were.

Look for life. Look for what the mouth is doing. Look for what behavior is like.

Second, we should just take a look at the final verse of chapter 13. There we hear about the number of the beast. Now, many attempts have been made to identify the number 666 with key figures in history.

And there are some doozies, let me tell you. One or two of the reformers got named. Some really bad people in history have been named. Nero, you can work the name out to be 666.

[33 : 47] I think all of that's rather wrong-headed in my view. The way to think about it is that the number 7 is the number for completeness or perfection.

And the number 3 is the number for things spiritual. So what would God's number likely be? 777. However, if someone was trying to masquerade as God, as we've seen them doing in chapter 13, what would be a good number for such a person?

Well, an ideal number would be a spiritual number that fell just short in its three numbers from 7. So you'd get 666.

And it's exactly what we've seen in these chapters, isn't it? A false trinity. It's what we see repeated through history. Friends, 666 is, in my view, the number of every Christian attempt, every Christless attempt at utopia.

It's the number of every attempt by humans to set up or organize the world without Christ. It is what the world constantly does. It is what our country tries to do.

[34 : 59] It is what our world is trying to do currently. A perfect world is not possible at the instigation of humans. For Genesis 3 has told us what is in the heart of humans.

It is sin. And what is governed by the hearts of humans without God will only issue in pain and destruction. And it will be judged by the true and living God at the end of time.

Let's move on. And again, pick up pace again. Chapter 14, verses 1 to 5. We meet the 144,000 again. This is their epic story. They bear the mark of God and they are in God's presence.

They are pure and chaste. Or chaste. Now, that is, what does that mean? Does it mean they've never had sex? No, I don't think so. I think it means they have not been unfaithful to the true God. Does that make sense? They've not been unfaithful to the true God. They have not cavorted with the Babylonian whore that we'll meet in the chapters to come. Okay? Then we come to epic story 6.

[36 : 03] We meet the three angels. The first has an eternal gospel to proclaim. It's a gospel of repentance for people from every nation, tribe, language and people.

I want you to notice. This angel flies giving people a chance. A chance to repent. They are to turn back from false worship of false deities.

They are to worship the God revealed in scripture. That is he who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water. The second angel proclaimer announces the corollary. If true worship is found only in the worship of the true God, then it goes to say that false worship of false gods has no future.

Hence, the second angel proclaims the end of Babylon the Great. Worship of her is the opposite of worship of the true God. It is spiritual adultery, which contrasts with the chastity of the 144,000.

The third angel explains what will happen if the advance of the first gospel proclaimer is not listened to. That is, if you've got a choice now, you see, first or second. If you don't listen to the first, you will drink the wine of God's fury.

[37 : 11] Friends, please listen carefully. As we approach the end, and tomorrow we'll be closer to the end than we are today. As we approach the end, we must urge people as the angels are urging.

God is long-suffering, not wanting any to perish. That's why he's holding off the day. But the day of Christ is coming.

It is closer today than it was yesterday. And those who have chosen to isolate themselves from him and all his goodness will receive what they want eternally.

You see, a God who does not separate good from evil is not a God you want to know or worship, is he?

And a God who does not reward good is not a God you want to know or worship either. So be warned, don't cave into the temptations of this world, but also be encouraged and comforted, because if you're a Christian, your reward is sure, and it will be true rest in the presence of this God and of his Son.

[38 : 22] Now let me turn to the final epic story in chapter 14, verses 14 to 20. It is the final judgment promised by Jesus. And I want you to know that it is overseen by him, one like a son of man.

What unfolds in these verses is overseen by the Lord Jesus Christ. Under the command of God, he swings his sickle over the earth in verse 16.

And the things he taught about in his parables are enacted. He preached about them himself.

Please understand, it is not popular in our day. But there is going to be a great divide at the end.

And the place where you'll be at that great divide will be determined by what you decide now. And in the end, there are only two possibilities before you. You can stand in the company of the Lamb as one of the 144,000 sealed by him.

Or you can stand as a worshipper of those opposed to God, in which case you will share their destiny. You can follow the Lamb or you can worship the beast. There are only two destinies.

[39 : 33] Life or salvation, life or death, salvation or judgment. And those who do not worship the Lamb have effectively worshipped the beast. To ignore Jesus effectively, to have rejected him.

So our world thinks you can just ignore Jesus, not important. Nothing could be further from the truth. I want to close by reflecting upon the way God has made us.

You see, the point of, I think, these chapters, these passages that we've read tonight, is that we humans were made for worship. We're so constituted that we must worship.

God has sewn it into our beings. And if we do not worship the true and living God, then we will buy into and worship an alternative. We may not understand that that's what we're doing, but it is what we will do.

Or we'll construct a God for ourselves. Or we'll listen to others who are willing to construct one for us and put it on the plate for us. But such are not gods.

[40 : 38] They're the products of human darkened imaginations or of the devil himself. And they will inevitably reap the consequences. Friends, please understand what God is doing here.

You see, we have a tendency to downplay what is going on in our world. But not God. Nor this inspired author. No, God is telling us to look behind the outer facade of earthly events and to see behind them eternal truth.

And those eternal truths will have their way. Because God is their author. And those eternal truths are that God, the author and lover of truth, will make them plain in history.

And at last, he will divide truth from falsehood, wheat from weeds. And he'll judge all evil and unrighteousness. And he'll do away with suffering and death.

And everything imperfect and corruptible shall utterly pass away. And only the perfect and the holy and that aligned with God will remain. And friends, that is the word of God and it can be trusted.

[41 : 46] Let's pray. Let's pray. Father, we hear these words and our emotions go in all sorts of directions.

We fear for our world and we fear for our friends. We also long for the vindication of distant brothers and sisters or some closer who are overwhelmed by suffering, particularly suffering for their faith.

And Father, we like you, because we've been taught by you and taught by your son, don't want any to perish, but all to come to salvation.

So we thank you that you are holding off this day. But Father, we pray that you'd help us to stand firm so that we might be ready on that day to meet you, to meet your son.

And Father, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[42 : 59] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.