

Christ in Prophecy

Revelation 3: “*Chapters 8-12*”

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Opening

David Reagan: The Bible teaches from beginning to end that right before the return of the Lord there will be a seven-year period of Tribulation upon this earth that will result in the annihilation of more than half of humanity. In fact, the Bible says this period will be so terrible that if God did not cut it short, no one would be left alive. What is this period of Tribulation all about? Does God simply lose His temper with humanity? Or, is there some positive purpose? Stay tuned.

Part 1

David Reagan: Greetings to all of you in the name of Jesus our blessed hope. I'm Dave Reagan, Senior Evangelist for Lamb & Lion Ministries and I am blessed once more to have two great colleagues with me -- Dennis Pollock, my Teaching and Preaching Associate, and Don McGee, the Founder, Director and Evangelist of Crown and Sickle Ministries in Amite, Louisiana. Now we are in the process of making a fascinating journey through the book of Revelation. Our theme from the beginning has been; that the book of Revelation is not difficult to understand; it is difficult to believe. If you will believe it for its plain sense meaning, you will understand it.

Dennis Pollock: Two weeks ago we took a look at chapters 1 thru 3. We saw that the basic purpose of these first three chapters was to encourage the Church, then and now, to persevere and remain faithful to God's Word while waiting expectantly for the Lord's return.

Don McGee: Last week we surveyed chapters 4 thru 7. In chapters 4 and 5 we read about John experiencing a rapture when he was transported from earth to the Throne Room of God. And we read about how he received assurance that God is on His throne and in complete control, orchestrating all the evil of mankind to the triumph of His Son, Jesus.

Dennis Pollock: Then, in chapter 6 we encountered the beginning of the seven years of Tribulation that will bring the Church Age to a close. We discovered that one-fourth of humanity will die in the opening years of the Tribulation as the Antichrist launches a war to conquer the earth.

Don McGee: We concluded last week by looking at chapter 7, it is an interlude chapter designed to encourage the reader. It indicates that 144,000 born again Jews will evangelize the world, resulting in a great harvest of souls, most of whom will die as martyrs for Christ.

David Reagan: This week we are going to survey chapters 8 thru 12. With chapter 8 the action resumes with the pouring out of the second series of judgments upon Mankind -- the trumpet judgments. Let's look first at a segment of my video teaching program called, "Revelation Revealed," and then we will return here for a discussion of some of the issues that are raised in these particular chapters.

Part 2

David Reagan: As we come to chapter 8 we're still in the first half of the Tribulation, and God's judgments resume. It says there is silence in Heaven for half an hour. It's as if all of Heaven is holding its breath before the pouring out of another series of terrible judgments. In chapter 8:7, the new series of judgments,

the trumpet judgments, begin to fall very quickly. They begin with hail and fire mixed with blood being thrown down to the earth. And incredibly, one-third of the earth is burned up and one-third of the earth's waters are polluted. Until recently, most commentators interpreted these trumpet judgments to be supernatural acts of God, and you know they could be. However, when God pours out His wrath, He often does so by relaxing his restraints on human behavior, unleashing people to destroy themselves. This process is clearly outlined in Romans chapter 1, where we are told that when a society rebels against God and refuses to repent, the Lord will step back, lower His hedge of protection, and allow evil to take its course.

I believe God's restraining hand is the only reason nuclear weapons have not been used since World War II. And speaking of nuclear weapons, I think it is significant that we are the only generation that has ever lived that has the capacity to bring upon ourselves the enormous destruction described in Revelation. This is due to the development of nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles. The power of these weapons is absolutely breathtaking. For example, one nuclear submarine today carries more firepower than all the bombs dropped during World War II. I believe chapter 8 is a first century man's description of a nuclear holocaust. Verse 12 says that one-third of the light of the sun, moon and stars is blocked out. And you know that is exactly what would happen in a nuclear holocaust because so much debris would be sucked up into the atmosphere by the explosions. The dense cloud that would be produced would cause temperatures to plummet below freezing all over the world, causing many people to freeze to death. And that same cloud would be carrying nuclear radiation, which is probably the reason that we are told in Revelation 16:2 that by the end of the Tribulation, people's bodies will be covered with sores that will not heal. In short, after the nuclear holocaust described in chapter 8, the living will envy the dead.

Jesus himself may have been referring to the age of nuclear weapons when He declared that one of the characteristics of the end times would be, "Men fainting from fear over the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken."

The trumpet judgments continue in chapter 9 with a plague of demonic locusts. They inflict a sting that causes people to suffer so terribly that they long for death, but they cannot die. Their torment continues for five months. The locusts are empowered to inflict their suffering upon all people except the 144,000 Jews who have been sealed by God. When the sixth trumpet is blown, an army of 200 million is let loose. This terrible scourge proceeds to kill one-third of those left alive after the seal judgments. Combined with the one-fourth of humanity that died in the war of the seal judgments, this means that one-half of the world's population will be killed in the first half of the Tribulation. Folk's, that's three billion people in today's terms!

I believe this army of 200 million is the same as the one mentioned in the book of Daniel where it states that an army will march against the Antichrist from the east. Daniel says that when the Antichrist hears of this army, the news will greatly disturb him, and he will retreat to a place, "between the seas" where he will prepare to confront the army. That place, between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea, would be of course the valley of Jezreel, or the Valley of Armageddon, as it is called in Revelation 16:16. I believe this passage in Daniel indicates that the nations of Asia will revolt against the Antichrist. As they march across Asia, they're going to slaughter one-third of humanity. And when they reach the Euphrates River at the end of the Tribulation, it will be dried up to allow them to cross into the valley of Armageddon where they will attack the armies of the Antichrist. That's when the Lord will return.

Chapter 9 ends on a very sad note. We are told that despite the unparalleled carnage of the trumpet judgments, "The rest of mankind, who were not killed by

these plagues, did not repent of their works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols and they did not repent of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their immorality, nor of their thefts."

At this point in the Tribulation, it's as if man is shaking his fist at God. As Billy Graham has often said, "The same sun that melts the butter hardens the clay." The Gospel sometimes melts hearts and sometimes hardens hearts depending upon whether or not the person is willing to receive the message, the same is true of the judgments of God.

As we arrive at chapter 10 the chronological action stops once again. This is what I call "the rhythm" of the book of Revelation. The action builds, the terror mounts, it gets worse and worse and worse, and then, all of a sudden, it comes to a screaming halt, and a parenthetical passage is inserted to assure us that everything is going to work out all right. After all, by the time you get to the end of chapter 9 the world situation looks pretty grim.

So, chapter 10 is a parenthesis that presents another flash-forward so that the reader can be assured that everything is going to turn out okay in the end. John suddenly sees a very unusual angel. What the Bible calls a "strong angel." The angel is clothed with a cloud, he has a rainbow upon his head, his face is like the sun, and his feet are like pillars of fire. I don't think there's much doubt who this is. This mighty angel is Jesus, the point is not that Jesus is an angel, because we know from the Bible that He is God in the flesh. He is therefore greater than all the angels, and that's the reason that we are told in Hebrews 1 that the angels worship Him. He's existed forever, whereas the angels were created. The imagery here is based upon the Old Testament passages that present Jesus in His pre-incarnate state as, "the Angel of the Lord," which is a term of endearment. We know this is Jesus because He is clothed with a cloud, which is a representation of the Shekinah glory of God. Further, He has a rainbow upon His head, and we saw in chapter 4 that's the symbol of faithfulness that crowns

the throne of God. His face is like the sun, that's right out of the description of Jesus in chapter 1, as is the reference to His feet being like pillars of fire. The clue that clinches the angel's identity is in verse 2 where we are told that He has a little scroll in His right hand, which He holds up as He claims possession of the earth. In chapter 5 we learned that Jesus was the only one in all the universe who was qualified to take that scroll from the hand of God the Father. What we have here is another flash-forward to the end of the Tribulation to assure us that everything is going to turn out all right. Jesus is going to return in triumph to claim the earth for the children of God.

In chapter 11 the tribulation action resumes in the city of Jerusalem. In verse 3 we are introduced to two witnesses of God who are referred to symbolically as olive trees and lamp stands because they proclaim the light of God's Word in the power of God's Spirit. No one knows for sure who these men are, but based upon the miracles they perform, they could be Elijah and Moses. But, I think it is more likely they will be Elijah and Enoch. I say that because they are the only two men that were raptured to Heaven and thus did not experience death. And further, they are representatives of all of mankind, because Elijah prophesied to the Jews whereas Enoch was a prophet to the Gentiles. Whoever they may be, they will preach the word with great power during the first half of the Tribulation.

And then, in the middle of the Tribulation when the Antichrist reveals himself, he will kill these two great witnesses, and their bodies will lie in the streets of Jerusalem for three and a half days as the whole world rejoices. Think of it, the earth will be so evil that people will rejoice over the death of these two righteous men. But after three and a half days, they will suddenly be resurrected and caught up to the heaven before the eyes of all mankind as the world watches on television. At that point, God shakes Jerusalem with a terrible earthquake in retribution, and some of the inhabitants are so terrified that they turn their hearts to God.

We come now to chapter 12, one of the most crucial chapters in the book because it explains what Revelation is all about. The first six verses of chapter 12 constitute another one of those parenthetical passages. But unlike the previous ones we have run across, this one is a flashback rather than a flash-forward. It is designed to help us better understand what the Tribulation is all about. What the chapter in effect says is that the Tribulation is the consummation of a cosmic battle between God and Satan that has been going on in the supernatural world since the revolt of man in the Garden of Eden. It reminds us that Satan tried to stop the first coming of the Messiah, just as he is now trying to prevent his second coming.

The chapter is full of symbols. Let's take a look at them. The first symbol in chapter 12 is, "a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars over her head." Now many different interpretations have been given of this imagery. Some commentators claim that this woman represents the church. Catholics claim she is Mary, the mother of Jesus. Here is a classic example of why it is important to let the Bible interpret itself, wherever that is possible. The point is that this imagery comes right out of Joseph's dream in Genesis 37, where the sun stood for Jacob, the moon for Rachel, and the stars for Joseph's brothers. So, we can conclude that this woman represents the nation of Israel, the descendants of Jacob.

The woman is pregnant and is about to give birth. This refers to Israel providing the Messiah to the world. In verse 3, "a great red dragon," which is Satan, "tries to devour a male child" when he is born, which is, of course, exactly what Satan tried to do when he motivated king Herod to send his army to Bethlehem to kill all the babies at the time of Jesus' birth. But the male child, Jesus, is "caught up to God and to his throne," a reference to the ascension of Jesus.

And then the passage says He is in Heaven waiting, "to rule over all the nations with a rod of iron." These verses remind us that there is a great cosmic battle

going on over the dominion of planet earth. You see, God originally gave that dominion to man, but it was stolen by Satan when Adam and Eve gave in to his temptation and rebelled against God. Consequently, Satan is now, "the ruler of this world," and, "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." But one of the reasons Jesus died on the cross was to make it possible for man to reassert his rightful dominion over the earth. This is one of the many delayed benefits of the cross, our glorified bodies being another one. Jesus will reclaim dominion over the earth when He returns at the end of the Tribulation.

In verse 7 of chapter 12 the action resumes once again. We are in the middle of the Tribulation, and Satan tries one last time to take the throne of God. The result is a war in Heaven. The archangel Michael and the angels under his command fight against Satan and his demonic angels. Satan loses the battle and is cast down to earth. His access to Heaven is cut off. Verse 12 tells us something absolutely remarkable. It says that Satan realizes at this point that his time is short. Folks, that means Satan knows Bible prophecy! But despite his knowledge, he continues to struggle because he has deceived himself into believing that he can obstruct God's plans and emerge victorious.

At this point it appears that Satan actually possesses the Antichrist, even as he possessed Judas. We are told in Revelation 13:2 that Satan gives to the Antichrist, "His power, his throne and his great authority." Daniel also says that the Antichrist's power will be mighty, "but not by his own power." The first thing that Satan does is to motivate the Antichrist to launch a great persecution of, "the woman who gave birth to the male child." In other words, he picks up where Hitler left off with a maniacal campaign to destroy the Jewish people. According to Daniel, the Antichrist will launch this holocaust by marching into the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem and stopping the sacrifices. He will set up an, "abomination of desolation," probably a statue of himself. And he will blaspheme God and declare himself to be God.

The Jews, of course, will be horrified by these actions, and they will revolt. This will prompt the Antichrist to launch an all-out attack on the Jews worldwide. His purpose will be to annihilate every last one of them so that God cannot keep His promise to save a great remnant at the end of the Tribulation. Keep in mind that Satan hates the Jews with a passion. He hates them because they gave the world the Bible and the Messiah. He also hates them because they are God's chosen people -- chosen to be a witness of what it means to have a relationship with God. Another reason he hates them is because God has promised to save a great remnant of the Jews at the end of the Tribulation, and Satan does not want to see God fulfill that promise.

The Antichrist's extermination campaign in the middle of the tribulation prompts many Jews to flee, "into the wilderness" to a special place where they will be protected and nourished by God for, "a time and a times and a half times" -- a Jewish colloquialism for three and a half years. Daniel indicates the location of the wilderness safe place where the Jews will flee. He states that the Antichrist will conquer all the Middle East except Edom, Moab, and Ammon. These are areas that are all included in modern day Jordan. The wilderness hideaway in Jordan is likely to be the remarkable box-canyon city of Petra. It is a city whose buildings are carved out of the walls of the surrounding canyon. In its heyday, about 400 years before Christ, it contained a population of tens of thousands. Chapter 12 concludes by telling us that Satan is so enraged by God's protection of the Jewish remnant that he decides to, "make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus" -- a reference to Messianic Jews in other parts of the world.

Part 3

David Reagan: Now the five chapters I just reviewed on the videotape program break into four parts. Chapters 8 and 9 take the judgments of God to the mid-

point of the Tribulation. Chapter 10 gives us a flash-forward to the end of the Tribulation to assure us of Jesus' triumph. Chapter 11 introduces us to two witnesses of God who will call the world to repentance during the first half of the Tribulation. And then chapter 12 reminds us of the nature and purpose of the cosmic battle between God and Satan. It also summarizes the events that will occur in the middle of the Tribulation when Satan tries to take Heaven one last time. Well gentlemen, what impresses you most in these five chapters? Let's begin with you Dennis.

Dennis Pollock: Well Dave, there are a number of things, but one of the things that really stands out to me has to do with these angels that blow the trumpets, the shofars, the horrific judgments that come on the Earth. You have such things as the destruction of much of the vegetation that's on the Earth. Much of the life in the ocean is destroyed. Fresh water turns bitter and people die as a result of drinking it. Visibility is reduced and at one point it talks about a third of mankind killed on top of the fourth of mankind that's been killed, that we read about before.

David Reagan: That's another one and a half billion people.

Dennis Pollock: Again, a great example of, not so hard to understand, but hard to believe. I mean, who would want to believe the world is going to go through that kind of a thing. One of the things that amazes me and tells me we are getting close is that we have come, as a World, as a society, to the point where we can bring this on ourselves.

David Reagan: And we're the first generation that's ever been true of.

Dennis Pollock: Up to this point, up to the last 50 years or so, when people read this book and said, "You know, I believe it will happen," the only choice they

pretty much had was to say, “God’s up in Heaven just zapping these things down, He’s just going to zap here and zap there.”

David Reagan: All supernatural.

Dennis Pollock: Yeah, all supernatural. Suddenly we look at some of these things, the destruction of vegetation, the reduction of visibility, billions of people dying. We’re saying, “Wait a minute, we could do this ourselves. This could be a nuclear holocaust.” Of course Hal Lindsey, with his *Late Great Planet Earth*, was one of the first to popularize the idea that maybe just maybe this is a nuclear holocaust. One thing we can say for sure, it either is a nuclear holocaust, or it is something every bit as terrible. And so I think one of the signs of the times is we now have the technology. All God has to do is take His hand off and allow us to do what we probably would have done to ourselves long before, and that is begin to destroy one another.

Don McGee: And not only do we have the technology, but we have the human mindset that will allow us to destroy ourselves. Look at what He says in 9:20, “The rest of mankind who aren’t killed by these plagues did not repent of the works of their hands.” You know, Jesus had this problem when He was on the face of the Earth. He tried to do some miracles in His own hometown, in Nazareth, and the Bible says that He could do no miracles there or a lot of miracles there because they didn’t have any faith, miracles, in the absence of faith, simply hardens the heart.

David Reagan: That’s right.

Don McGee: And not only that, if you look at what else is...

David Reagan: Well, before go on, let me just say that I’m glad you mentioned that particular verse because it reminds me of a point that Billy Graham often

makes in his preaching. He talks about how the same sun that melts the butter hardens the clay. And the same with the Tribulation, with the judgments of God, some of the people, it will melt their hearts and they will repent and accept Jesus as their Messiah. But for the vast majority of mankind, it appears it's just going to cause them to double up their fists and curse God.

Don McGee: They're doing it now, their cursing God now. Look at who is the object of oppression, more than any other group in the world. Whether you're talking about in China, or any Muslim country, it's the Christian, it's the Christian. And even in this country, we are ridiculed, when such ridicule would call down the fires of Heaven if it were another group, but not so with Christians.

Dennis Pollock: We're not the politically correct crowd, for sure.

David Reagan: I mean you can't say anything against blacks or against homosexuals or against Jews. But Christians – open season.

Don McGee: That's right, license always.

Dennis Pollock: You know one of the things that really strikes me in this chapter is a very short little statement that every time I read it, it just hits me so hard. It says, "The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come." It's like, you know, we've seen the anger of the nations. We live in an angry world. I mean, you see anger everywhere. You see it on the streets, you see it on the freeways, you see it on the news, you see it with Palestinians throwing rocks, and suicide bombers attaching bombs to themselves, I mean, we live in a very angry world. The day is coming when we're going to see the wrath of God. The difference being, God's wrath is always just, it's always perfect, but it's going to be poured out. The nations are angry, but it says, "Now Your wrath has come."

David Reagan: Fellows, we have less than a minute for our discussion and I just can't let it go without saying, aren't you amazed at the persistence of Satan? It says he knows Bible prophecy and yet he still is fighting and trying to do everything he can to overthrow the throne of God in the middle of the Tribulation – tries one last time to take God's throne.

Don McGee: He knows his time is short.

David Reagan: You talk about self-deception, now this is self-deception.

Dennis Pollock: It's a great example of how you can be extremely intelligent, I mean, his intelligence is probably off the charts, and yet, utterly foolish, jus a total fool.

Don McGee: Condition of the heart, that's the key.

David Reagan: It really is, and there are so many people who are like that in so many different ways. Well, I appreciate your comments about these particular chapters. I hope that you the viewer will take a moment to read these chapters and let God speak to your heart about what He wants to tell you, because, remember, the word of God is, "alive and active and sharper than a two edged sword," and He will bring some of these passages alive and quicken them to your heart as you read them.

Part 4

David Reagan: As we bring our program to a close, I would like to emphasize a comment that is made in Revelation 12:11. That verse says there will be some people in the midst of the Tribulation who will be able to overcome Satan, "because of the blood of the Lamb." Gentlemen, what in the world does that mean?

Don McGee: Dave, the term refers to the blood of Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches from the beginning to end that there is no forgiveness of sin apart from the shedding of blood. In Old Testament times people sacrificed animals to atone for their sins, but these sacrifices were insufficient. There was no way that the blood of an animal could atone for the sins of a Man. The sacrifices served merely as acts of faith that reminded them of their need for a Savior -- a perfect Man who would serve as their sin substitute. Each year at Passover, they would sacrifice a perfect lamb -- one without any blemishes. That sacrifice pointed prophetically to the day when their Messiah would come and live a perfect life and then die for their sins. That's the reason that John the Baptist proclaimed Jesus to be "the Lamb of God." Jesus was crucified at Passover. He was our perfect sacrificial lamb, for He had no sin. Our sins were placed upon Him and He became our substitute, dying in our place for our sins. That's why no one can be saved apart from faith in Him.

David Reagan: Dennis, how in the world can a person apply the blood of Jesus to his sins today?

Dennis Pollock: Well, Dave, the process is so simple that most people find it hard to believe. Basically what one must do is put his faith and his trust in Jesus as his Savior. And that is done by confessing to God that you are a sinner, asking God to forgive you, and then receiving Jesus into your heart as your Lord and Savior. When you do that, your sins are placed under the blood of Christ, and they are forgiven by God and they are forgotten. They will never be held against you again.

David Reagan: Wow! That is really something. That is really salvation by grace through faith! You know folks, you don't just earn it; you just simply reach out and you receive it by faith.

Dennis Pollock: That's right Dave. And I would like to ask any of our unsaved viewers to join with me in prayer right now for their salvation. Pray with me these words: "Lord, I confess to you that I am a sinner. I ask you to forgive me of my sins. I accept Jesus right now as my Lord and Savior. Apply His precious blood to me that I might be born again and become a child of Yours with the promise of eternal life. Thank you, Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen."

David Reagan: If you prayed that prayer with Dennis, please seek out a Bible believing and Christ exalting church where you can witness your faith in public confession of Jesus and water baptism.

Well, folks, that's it for this week. Please be back with us next week as we take a look at chapters 13 thru 19 of Revelation. I tell you, they are exciting chapters that tell us how the Great Tribulation will end with the triumphant return of Jesus to this earth. Until then, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministries, saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our redemption is drawing near."

End of Program