

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 355 – December 21st – Revelation 12:1-18

Works frequently referenced in these notes on the book of Revelation

Morris, Leon	<i>The Revelation of St John</i> (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries), Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1969
Mounce, Robert H	<i>The Book of Revelation</i> (New International Commentary on the New Testament), Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1977
Peterson, Eugene H	<i>Reversed Thunder</i> , San Francisco, HarperCollins, 1991
Witherington, Ben	<i>Revelation</i> (New Cambridge Bible Commentary), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003

Chapter 12

"Before the seven last plagues of chapter 16, in which the wrath of God is finished (15:1), John turns aside to explain the underlying cause of the hostility about to break upon the church. During his earthly ministry Jesus had warned, 'If they persecuted me, they will persecute you' (Jn 15:20). It is the age-long conflict between God and Satan which accounts for the persecution the church is to experience. Although the crucial battle was won when Christ arose victorious over death and the grave, the adversary continues his struggle. Cast down from heaven and knowing that his time is short (12:12), Satan turns in rage against the faithful who 'keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus' (12:17). By laying bare the root cause of the persecution John would encourage believers to hold fast in the coming tribulation. The death struggle of a defeated foe will bring severe tribulation, but the outcome is certain – God will come in judgement to destroy his enemies (chapters 15-19) and reward his own (chaps. 20-22)." Mounce.

Mulholland describes the conflict between God and Satan using the imagery of chess: "At a certain point in many chess games, the one who ultimately wins makes a move that sets the mating net. That is, from that point on the outcome of the game is a foregone conclusion. There may be as many as ten or fifteen or even more moves left before the final checkmate move that seals the victory. During these endgame moves the loser is still playing the game, still capturing pieces from the winner. But inexorably, unavoidably, finally the winner makes the checkmate move and the loser is defeated... Often the move that sets the mating net is costly, a sacrificial move that lures the loser into a trap. The winner may sacrifice the most valuable piece in the game, appearing to insure defeat."

Witherington shows how the author draws on a range of conflict myths from Babylon, Egypt and Greece in chapter 12. He comments, "One gets the feeling that in apocalyptic prophecy all sources are fair game so long as they can be appropriately modified. Here, then, we have an example of 'plundering the Egyptians', so to speak." He also quotes Gibling who writes, "John produces a distinctively Christian perspective both from biblical and from pagan mythological language. Christianity reworks its biblical heritage and transforms pagan material in line with its own aim of communicating truth in its cultural context. Its tendency to inculcate the Gospel without adulterating it is as old as the NT itself."

Verse 1

Καὶ σημεῖον μέγα ὄφθη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, γυνὴ περιβεβλημένη τὸν ἥλιον, καὶ ἡ σελήνη ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτῆς στέφανος ἀστέρων δώδεκα,
σημειον, ου n miraculous sign, sign
ὄφθη see 11:19
γυνη, αικος f woman

"The woman is not Mary the mother of Jesus but the messianic community, the ideal Israel. Zion as the mother of the people of God is a common theme in Jewish writings (Isa 54:1... cf. Gal 4:26). It is out of faithful Israel that Messiah will come. It should cause no trouble that within the same chapter the woman comes to signify the church (v. 17). The people of God are one throughout all redemptive history. The early church did not view itself as discontinuous with faithful Israel." Mounce. Witherington draws attention to Isa 66:6-9 and argues that "mother Zion is in view or, as Paul would put it, the New Jerusalem, which is our mother (Gal 4:26)."

περιβεβλημένη Verb, perf pass ptc, f nom s
περιβαλλω put on, clothe, dress
ἥλιος, ου m the sun
σεληνη, ης f moon

ὑποκατω prep with gen under, beneath
 πους, ποδος m foot
 κεφαλη, ης f head
 στεφανος, ου m wreath, crown
 ἀστηρ, ερος m star
 δωδεκα twelve

"As God covers himself 'with light as with a garment' (Ps 104:2), so the woman is arrayed with the sun. The world may despise the true Israel and hold it in lowest esteem, but from God's point of view she is a radiant bride (cf. Jer 2:2). She stands as an obvious contrast to the scarlet whore of chapter 17. The moon beneath her feet speaks of dominion, and the crown of twelve stars depicts royalty." Mounce.

Verse 2

καὶ ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσα· καὶ κράζει ὠδίνουσα
 καὶ βασανιζομένη τεκεῖν.
 γαστρὶ Noun, dat s γαστηρ, τρος f womb;
 ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχω be pregnant
 κραζω cry out, call out
 ὠδίνουσα Verb, pres act ptc, f nom s ὠδίνω
 suffer birth pangs
 βασανίζω torment, disturb

Does not appear elsewhere in the NT in connection with labour, but is an entirely appropriate verb to describe the physical distress caused.

τεκεῖν Verb, aor act infin τικω bear, give birth to, produce

Verse 3

καὶ ὄφθη ἄλλο σημεῖον ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, καὶ
 ἰδοὺ δράκων μέγας πυρρός, ἔχων κεφαλὰς
 ἑπτὰ καὶ κέρατα δέκα καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς
 αὐτοῦ ἑπτὰ διαδήματα,
 ἄλλος, η, ο another, other
 δρακων, οντος m dragon (figurative term
 for the Devil)

The 'old serpent', the Devil or Satan (cf. v.9 and 20:2). In the OT the picture is used of the enemies of God's people (Is 27:1; Ezek 29:3).

πυρρος, α, ον red, fiery red

Symbolising his murderous character.

κεφαλη, ης f head
 ἑπτα seven
 κερας, ατος n horn
 δεκα ten

Cf. Dan 7-8 where it refers to the nations.

διαδημα, τος n diadem, crown

"Crowns of arrogated authority" Hendriksen.
 The numbers symbolise universal power.

Verse 4

καὶ ἡ οὐρὰ αὐτοῦ σύρει τὸ τρίτον τῶν ἀστέρων
 τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, καὶ ἔβαλεν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν γῆν.
 καὶ ὁ δράκων ἔστηκεν ἐνώπιον τῆς γυναίκος
 τῆς μελλούσης τεκεῖν, ἵνα ὅταν τέκη τὸ τέκνον
 αὐτῆς καταφάγη.

οὐρα, ας f tail
 συρω drag, drag away, sweep down
 τρίτος, η, ον third
 βαλλω throw, throw down

Cf. Dan 8:10. "emphasises the tremendous size and awesome power of the dragon." Mounce.

ἰστημι stand
 ἐνώπιον prep with gen before
 μελλω (before an infin) be going, be about
 τεκεῖν see v.2
 ὅταν when
 τέκη Verb, aor act subj, 3 s τικω
 τεκνον, ου n child
 καταφάγη Verb, aor act subj, 3 s κατεσθιω
 eat up, devour

"As Nebuchadnezzar devoured Israel ('He has swallowed me like a monster; he has filled his belly with my delicacies,' Jer 51:34), so has Satan determined to devour the child. He has taken his position and awaits the victim." Mounce.

Verse 5

καὶ ἔτεκεν υἱόν, ἄρσεν, ὃς μέλλει ποιμαίνειν
 πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ· καὶ ἠρπάσθη
 τὸ τέκνον αὐτῆς πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ πρὸς τὸν
 θρόνον αὐτοῦ.

ἔτεκεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s τικω
 ἄρσιν, εν gen ενος male, man
 μελλω be going, be destined
 ποιμαίνω tend as a shepherd, rule
 ῥαβδος, ου f stick, rod, sceptre
 σιδηρους, α, ουν made of iron

Cf. Ps 2. "As a shepherd defends his flock against the wild beasts of prey, so will Christ at his return strike the nations which oppress and persecute his church (cf. 19:15; ... 2:27)." Mounce.

ἠρπάσθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s ἀρπαζω
 take away, carry off
 θρονος, ου m throne

The focus moves directly to Jesus' ascension. "The significant point is that the evil designs of Satan were foiled by the successful completion of Christ's messianic ministry, which culminated in his ascension and exaltation (cf. Phil 2:5-11)." Mounce.

Witherington comments, "John is drawing on the traditions in regard to the birth of Apollo, which were also appropriated by Domitian to suggest that he was a divine being and the conqueror of evil." He quotes Reddish who writes, "John's reuse of this ancient myth challenges the divine claims and arrogant assumptions of the imperial cult. Christ, not the emperor, is the real victor over the malevolent forces of chaos, darkness and wickedness. John unmask the Roman power for what it truly is – a tool of Satan."

Verse 6

καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἔφυγεν εἰς τὴν ἔρημον, ὅπου ἔχει ἐκεῖ τόπον ἡτοιμασμένον ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα ἐκεῖ τρέφωσιν αὐτὴν ἡμέρας χιλίας διακοσίας ἑξήκοντα.

φευγω flee, run away (from)

ἐρημος, ου f deserted place

"The flight of the woman may in part reflect the escape of the Palestinian church to Pella at the outbreak of the Jewish war in AD 66." Mounce.

ὅπου adv. where

ἐκεῖ there, in that place, to that place

τοπος, ου m place

ἡτοιμασμένον Verb, perf pass ptc, m acc & n
nom/acc s ἐτοιμαζω prepare

τρέφω feed, provide with food, sustain

"The intent of the verse, however, is not so much the flight of the church as the provision of God for her sustenance. To the Jewish people the wilderness spoke of divine provision and intimate fellowship. It was in the wilderness that God had rained down bread from heaven (Ex 16:4ff) and nourished his people for forty years. Of Israel God said, 'I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her' (Hos 2:14; cf. 1 Kgs 17:2-3; 19:3-4)." Mounce. So Witherington writes, "Perhaps John is especially drawing on the prophetic recasting of the Exodus/Sinai events such as found in Isa 40:3 or Hos 2:14. There is a reference to a new exodus into the desert when Israel's future redemption arrives. John indicates in his vision that the people of God will be nourished (by God) just as the Israelites had been in the wilderness by manna and quail. The text does not say the people of God are raptured into heaven or any celestial place. The image is of protection on earth from the wrath of the dragon, something one does not need protection from if one is in heaven."

χιλίας Noun, nom s or Adjective, f acc pl

χιλιας, αδος f a thousand

διακοσιοι, αι, α two hundred

ἑξήκοντα sixty

The period of three and a half years or 1260 days (cf. 11:2; 13:5) is commonly used in this part of Revelation as a symbol for the gospel age. It is of interest to note that James 5:17 also speaks of a period of three and a half years, referring back to 1 Kings 17 ff. This was a period during which God protected and provided for the prophet Elijah.

Verse 7

Καὶ ἐγένετο πόλεμος ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ Μιχαὴλ καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ τοῦ πολεμῆσαι μετὰ τοῦ δράκοντος. καὶ ὁ δράκων ἐπολέμησεν καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ,

πολεμος, ου m war, battle

πολεμεω wage war, fight

Satan seeking to depose God. On the archangel Michael, cf. Jude 9. John is adapting traditional material, Witherington writes, "In Test. of Dan. 6:2 Michael is the mediator between God and humanity, and the angel of the nation Israel fighting against the angelic leaders of the Gentile nations (cf. Dan 10:13ff.; 12:1). In 1 En. 54:6 he is one of four angels who casts the fallen angels into the fiery furnace on judgment day. In the Qumran literature, Michael is the Prince of Light who leads the children of light into battle against Belial (War Scroll 13:10-12; 17:6-8; Community Rule 3:20-4:1). Here his task is to take on the adversary of the people of God in general. Michael prevails, and the Devil and his minions are cast down to earth."

Verse 8

καὶ οὐκ ἴσχυσεν, οὐδὲ τόπος εὐρέθη αὐτῶν ἐτι ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ.

ἰσχυω be strong, be able, be sufficient

τοπος, ου m place

εὐρέθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s εὐρισκω
find

ἐτι still, yet, any more

Mounce argues that these verses do not refer to Satan's original fall but to an eschatological event. Satan is depicted in Scripture as having access to heaven (Job 1:6-9; 2:1-6; Zech 3:1ff.). As a result of this attempted assault he will have no further access. "It is the irretrievable loss of any further opportunity to fulfil his wicked plan that sends Satan out in such great anger against the church."

Witherington writes, "A threefold fall of Satan can be noted in Revelation: (1) from heaven to earth (12:9); (2) from earth to the abyss (20:2); and (3) from the abyss into the lake of fire (20:10). The first casting down of Satan, the text seems to imply, transpires as the result of the death/ascension of the Messiah. This is why tribulation comes on the earth after Jesus' ascension." He quotes Koester, "From a heavenly perspective ... evil rages on earth not because it is so powerful, but because it is vulnerable. Revelation likens Satan to a rogue animal that the forces of God have corralled, driving it off the expansive plains of heaven into the fenced-in area of earth. The beast rampages within its newly limited circumstances seeking to do as much damage as possible during the short time that remains until the company of heaven slips the noose around its head, binds its legs and chains it up so that it can do no further damage (12:11; 20:2)... those who recognise that Satan rages on earth because he has already lost heaven and is now desperate have no reason to resist him, confident that God will prevail."

Verse 9

καὶ ἐβλήθη ὁ δράκων ὁ μέγας, ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος, ὁ καλούμενος Διάβολος καὶ ὁ Σατανᾶς, ὁ πλανῶν τὴν οἰκουμένην ὅλην – ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν γῆν, καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ μετ' αὐτοῦ ἐβλήθησαν.

ἐβλήθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s βαλλω
throw, throw down

Cf. Lk 10:18.

ὄφις, εως m snake, serpent

Cf. Gen 3:1ff.

ἀρχαῖος, α, ον old, ancient
διάβολος, ου m the devil
Σατανᾶς, α the Adversary, Satan
πλανῶ lead astray, mislead, deceive
οἰκουμένη, ης f world, inhabited earth
ὅλος, η, ον whole, all, complete, entire
ἐβλήθησαν Verb, aor pass indic, 3 pl βαλλω

Verse 10

Καὶ ἤκουσα φωνὴν μεγάλην ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ λέγουσαν· Ἄρτι ἐγένετο ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ἐβλήθη ὁ κατήγορ τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἡμῶν, ὁ κατηγορῶν αὐτοὺς ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός.

ἄρτι now, at the present
σωτηρία, ας f salvation
δύναμις, εως f power
ἐξουσία, ας f authority, power
κατήγορ, ορος m accuser

κατηγορεῶ accuse, bring charges against
νύξ, νυκτος f night

Cf. Job 1:6-12; 2:1-5. "By virtue of the death of Christ he is unable successfully to lodge a charge against God's elect (Rom 8:33-34)." Mounce.

Verse 11

καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐνίκησαν αὐτὸν διὰ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ ἀρνίου καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν, καὶ οὐκ ἠγάπησαν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτῶν ἄχρι θανάτου·

νικῶ conquer, overcome
αἷμα, ατος f blood
ἄρνιον, ου n lamb, sheep
μαρτυρία, ας f testimony, witness
ἀγαπῶ love, show love for
ψυχή, ης f self, life, 'soul'
ἄχρι prep with gen until, as far as
θανάτος, ου m death

Verse 12

διὰ τοῦτο εὐφραίνεσθε, οἱ οὐρανοὶ καὶ οἱ ἐν αὐτοῖς σκηνοῦντες. οὐαὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν, ὅτι κατέβη ὁ διάβολος πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ἔχων θυμὸν μέγαν, εἰδὼς ὅτι ὀλίγον καιρὸν ἔχει.

εὐφραίνω make glad; pass be glad,
rejoice

Cf. Is 49:13; Ps 96:11. See also Lk 10:18.

σκηνοῶ live, dwell
οὐαὶ interj. woe!

Mounce considers that this is not the 'third woe' (cf. 8:12; 9:12; 11:14) since this one relates to hostility towards believers rather than the judgement of the wicked.

θάλασσα, ης f sea
καταβαίνω come or go down
θυμός, ου m anger, rage, fury
εἰδὼς Verb, perf act ptc, m nom s οἶδα
know
ὀλίγος, η, ον little, small
καιρός, ου m time, appointed time

"The troubles of the persecuted righteous arise not because Satan is too strong, but because he is beaten." Morris.

Verse 13

Καὶ ὅτε εἶδεν ὁ δράκων ὅτι ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν γῆν, ἐδίωξεν τὴν γυναῖκα ἣτις ἔτεκεν τὸν ἄρσενά.

ὅτε conj when
διώκω persecute, seek after, pursue

"Exodus typology is woven throughout this entire episode. The pursuit of the woman is similar to Pharaoh's pursuit of the children of Israel as they fled from Egypt (Ex 14:8)." Mounce.

ὅστις, ἡτίς, ὁ τι who, which
 ἔτεκεν see v.5
 ἄρσην, ἐν γεν ενος see v.5

Verse 14

καὶ ἐδόθησαν τῇ γυναικὶ αἱ δύο πτέρυγες τοῦ
 ἀετοῦ τοῦ μεγάλου, ἵνα πέτηται εἰς τὴν ἔρημον
 εἰς τὸν τόπον αὐτῆς, ὅπου τρέφεται ἐκεῖ
 καιρὸν καὶ καιροὺς καὶ ἡμισυ καιροῦ ἀπὸ
 προσώπου τοῦ ὄφεως.

ἐδόθησαν Verb, aor pass indic, 3 pl δίδωμι
 πτερυξ, υγος f wing
 ἄετος, ου m eagle

Cf. Deut 32:10-11; Isa 40:31.

πετομαι fly

ἔρημος, ου f For this and much of the
 immediately following vocabulary, see v.6.

ὅπου adv. where
 καιρος, ου m time, season
 ἡμισυς, εια, υ gen ἡμισυς half

Once again the period of three and a half years.

προσωπον, ου n face, presence
 ὄφις, εως m snake, serpent

Verse 15

καὶ ἔβαλεν ὁ ὄφις ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ
 ὀπίσω τῆς γυναικὸς ὕδωρ ὡς ποταμὸν, ἵνα
 αὐτὴν ποταμοφόρητον ποιήσῃ.

βαλλω throw, throw down, pour
 στομα, τος n mouth
 ὀπισω prep with gen after, behind, follow
 ὕδωρ, ὕδατος n water
 ποταμος, ου m river, stream
 ποταμοφορητος, ον swept away by a river

Cf. Ps 18:4. "Historically the episode could refer to the attempt on the part of the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem to stamp out the early church (Acts 8:1-3...). Or it could refer to the river of lies which will threaten even the elect (2 Thess 2:9-11; Rev 13:14; Mt 24:24) in the last days. This river of deceit (cf. 2:9; 3:9) has as its counterpart the 'rivers of water of life' which flows bright as crystal from the heavenly throne (21:1)." Mounce.

Witherington writes, "This may be an allusion to the Exodus/Sinai events. But since in the primal myth it is the sea monster who is the evil one, it is not surprising that water is his modus vivendi to do in the woman."

Verse 16

καὶ ἐβοήθησεν ἡ γῆ τῇ γυναικί, καὶ ἤνοιξεν ἡ
 γῆ τὸ στόμα αὐτῆς καὶ κατέπιεν τὸν ποταμὸν
 ὃν ἔβαλεν ὁ δράκων ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ·

βοηθεω help
 ἀνοίγω open

κατέπιεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s καταπινω
 swallow, swallow up

Verse 17

καὶ ὠργίσθη ὁ δράκων ἐπὶ τῇ γυναικί, καὶ
 ἀπῆλθεν ποιῆσαι πόλεμον μετὰ τῶν λοιπῶν
 τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς, τῶν τηρούντων τὰς
 ἐντολάς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν
 Ἰησοῦ·

ὀργίζομαι be furious, be angry
 ποιῆσαι Verb, aor act infin ποιεω
 πολεμος, ου m war, battle, strife
 λοιπος, η, ον rest, remaining, other
 σπερμα, τος n seed, offspring
 τηρεω keep, observe
 ἐντολη, ης f command
 μαρτυρια, ας f testimony, witness

The reference is to believers generally. There may here be an echo of Gen 3:15.

Verse 18

καὶ ἐστάθη ἐπὶ τὴν ἄμμον τῆς θαλάσσης.

This verse is sometimes left unnumbered and read as the beginning of 13:1.

ἐστάθη Verb, 2 aor act indic, 3 s ἵστημι
 stand
 ἄμμος, ου f sand, seashore
 θαλασσα, ης f sea