Cartoon of two men pointing at letters

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***Another Perspective***

**November 18-19, 2024**

**The Many Expressions of Three and a Half Years –** I have been intrigued by the fact that the Holy Spirit expressed “three and a half years” in so many different ways in Revelation. God doesn’t do *anything* randomly, so I wondered if there was some significance to the variety. I started looking at those “seven histories” again and went on a rather fascinating journey—fascinating to me, at least!—so I’ll share my steps with you. (Sort of the Edie Sartor version of “Driving Thru History”. 😊)

I started with the first history and was interested to see that after the woman clothed with the sun gave birth to her child, she “fled into the wilderness, where she has a place *prepared by God*, in which she is to be *nourished* for 1260 *days*.” Seeing the word “nourished” paired with a length of time measured in “days” reminded me of praying to *God*, “Give us this day our *daily bread*,” and that reminded me that the Israelites who wandered in the wilderness in the Old Testament were nourished by manna *every day*—manna sent from God. So I looked to see where else Revelation mentioned 1260 days and discovered that the only other time was back in chapter 11:3-6, when we were told that the two witnesses “will prophesy for 1260 days” AND that “they have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying.” At first glance, that context doesn’t seem to have any connection with the woman being nourished for 1260 days. But think about it. What happens to crops when there is no rainfall for 3½ years? There aren’t any! People would begin to starve…but God will see to it that *His* people are nourished each and every day during that entire time. [It was interesting to me to remember that back in Elijah’s day, rain didn’t fall for 3½ years, either. (See Luke 4:25 and James 5:17.) But God miraculously provided for his “nourishment” during that time in a variety of ways.]

So then I checked out “time, times, and half a time” and discovered that that expression only occurs twice in the entire Bible! One is in Revelation 12:14, which says that “the woman was given two wings…so that she might fly…into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be *nourished* for a time, times, and half a time.” The other place is in Daniel 12:7. Daniel had been given one final vision about the end times, and in it he heard one man ask another, “How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?” The answer is given by a man clothed in linen who “raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time.” So not only will the woman in the wilderness receive nourishment daily, she will also know that this difficult time will be over in 3½ years. (It is always comforting to have an end in sight.)

The final version of 3½ years, given in months, also occurs only twice in Scripture, both of them in Revelation. We saw last week in Revelation 13:5 that the beast from the sea “was allowed to exercise authority for 42 months.” Back in Revelation 11:2, John was told not to measure the court outside the temple because “it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for 42 months.” So when evil people are in control, bad things happen…until their time is up. As Daniel was told in his final vision, “when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end, all these things would be finished” (Daniel 12:7).

**Prepared by God –** During the adult Sunday School class this week Caleb was taking us through parts of Exodus 23, and my attention was captured by a phrase in verse 20 that sounded familiar. God was speaking to the Israelites and telling them, “Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to *bring you to the place that I have prepared*.” And then I thought of what Jesus told His disciples in John 14:1-2. He had told them that He was going away, and they were troubled and unsettled about it. So He assured them, “Let not your hearts be troubled…*I go to prepare a place for you*.” This just reminded me that God has been providing places of safety for His people in every generation, and so it is no surprise to find that He will continue to do so in Revelation 12:6, as mentioned above.

**Comments on Today’s Displays –** Revelation chapters 14 and 15 contain *many* memorable scenes, coming in rapid succession, and I wondered which ones to highlight for today’s class. As I thought and prayed about it and read through the chapters and commentaries again, I realized that there was one scene in particular that I had kind of breezed through…and consequently had misread, i.e. Christ on Mount Zion greeting the 144,000 who had His name on their foreheads. For some reason I had visualized this scene in heaven…but Mount Zion is one of the mountains on which the city of Jerusalem is built…on *earth*. And that changed my perspective on the entire scene. Think about what is happening on earth at this point: the “unholy trinity” is in almost complete control, forcing people to worship the beast and receive his mark on their foreheads, or they won’t be allowed to buy or sell anything…like food to eat. In fact, those who refuse to receive this blasphemous mark probably won’t even be allowed to live! But these 144,000 do NOT have this mark on their foreheads. They were sealed earlier and now we learn that this seal is Christ’s name. They have remained faithful to Christ throughout this terrible time of persecution, and He has protected them and provided special nourishment for them, as mentioned above. Now it is apparently time for them to come home to heaven…and Christ has come to personally escort them there. I say that, because we see them with Christ at Mount Zion, and then almost immediately we read that they are learning a new song in heaven. We also read that they “follow the Lamb wherever He goes”…and He has led them right into heaven itself. This is a very precious scene of Christ caring personally for His sheep. He has not left them alone. It reminds me of the vision of Christ that Stephen had as he was facing imminent death: Christ was there to welcome him home, and that made all the difference.

**Flying Angels and Harvesting –** Next we encounter three angels, flying across the sky in quick succession, giving three messages about impending judgment. And then there is another vision of Christ, this time seated on a cloud with a sharp sickle in His hand, ready to start harvesting what is needed for the final judgments.

**Sea of Glass Mixed with Fire –** As chapter 15 begins we are told about a sea of glass mixed with fire, with a vast multitude of faithful followers of Christ standing on it, so that has been added to our heavenly scene this week.