

Revelation: The Church Triumphant Through Christ the Lamb of God

Based upon Jim McGuiggan's work on the book of Revelation

The Book of Revelation: A Woman, A City, and Witnesses

Lesson Four

In this lesson, we will learn that ...

- The Glorious Woman of chapter 12 is the people of God.
 - When the image of a woman is used, the people are viewed as a whole (as distinct from individuals).
 - John's "pictures" are drawn mainly from the Old Testament scriptures.
 - The glorious City of chapters 21 & 22 is the people of God as triumphant over Rome her enemy.
 - The two Witnesses are the people of God who suffer but cannot be stopped or utterly defeated.
-

The central message of the book of Revelation is that God alone is to be worshiped and served and that that truth is to be maintained when the Roman beast rises against the people of God. The central message of the book is that the Roman Empire is the expression of the world spirit (the Dragon, Satan) that opposes God's kingdom purpose as it shows itself in Jesus Christ and his followers. The central message is that when the smoke clear it's the followers of the Lord Christ that are triumphant and that his Lordship is made concrete and local here on the earth. The Roman Empire claims dominion but it's a satanic claim. They "prove" it by brutality and cruelty. The church insists that Jesus has dominion and they prove it (as followers of Christ) by outliving, out-suffering and out-lasting Rome.

The Glorious Woman (12:1-17)

We've glanced at the people of God under the image of 144,000 Israelites. Now here's a brief look at the people of God presented in the image of a glorious woman. The people of God are spoken of as individuals throughout scripture, of course, but very often they are spoken of as a corporate whole. The image of a woman is then used. See Lamentations 1:1, Ezekiel 16:2,32, Isaiah 47:1,5,7,8 and Micah 4:10 as a few examples out of a host. The woman is seen as the corporate whole and the individuals are spoken of as "her children" (see Revelation 12:7 as an example).

This glorious woman wears a crown of twelve stars (12:1) that identifies her as the representative of the whole people of God. The high priest in the Old Testament wore a breastplate on which twelve precious stones were placed. He carried them on his heart into the Holy of Holies and made atonement for the whole house of Israel. The splendor of this glorious woman is that in her crown she has the inner nature of the twelve tribes of Israel (see again the comments on the 144,000 and see Revelation 7:4-8). The number twelve (see later) is the number of God's people.

She wears the sun and has the moon under her feet (12:1). These are the appointed sources that bring light to the world. The Woman is that light-bearer. See Philippians 2:15 and Matthew 5:14-16 and elsewhere.

This picture borrows heavily from the Old Testament. Here you have a woman and her seed opposed by the Serpent (12:9) and that's what we find in Genesis 3:1-5, 14-15. We find the Woman pregnant, about to give birth and the Dragon waiting to destroy the newly born. This is what we find in Exodus 1:15-16 when the Egyptian king sought the death of the newly born. Here we have the Dragon trying to destroy the Woman by using a river at flood (12:15) and that's what we find in Exodus 1:22. (Isaiah 51:9-10 speaks of Egypt as a dragon. In that day she was how satanic forces expressed themselves.)

The Woman is to be persecuted by the dragon. She suffers a wilderness experience (12:6,14) but even in the wilderness God takes care of her. This echoes the case of Elijah being cared for during the famine that lasted three and a half years (more later) and it reminds us of Israel in the wilderness sustained by God. The Dragon cannot destroy the Child or the Woman (see Matthew 16:18) so he turns on the "rest of her seed". When the Woman's children are seen as contained in her—they are a single entity. They are seen as her "children" when they're looked at as individuals (see 12:11,17).

Remember: The Woman is the People of God viewed as a corporate whole, a single unit. The People of God viewed individually are called "her children".

The Glorious City (21:2—22:5)

The glorious city is the people of God. We saw that the Roman Empire was seen under the images of a wicked Woman and a famed City. The people of God are seen as a glorious Woman and a glorious City.

The Holy City is described as a bride adorned for her husband (21:2). Pay special attention to the fact that when the angel shows John the "bride of the Lamb" (21:9) it is a holy City he shows him (21:10). Now the wife of the Lamb (21:9) is the People of God, the church of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:25-32).

Much of the language and imagery of the People of God as a City is taken from Old Testament texts. Note that the City is a square with walls 1,500 miles high, wide and long. They are 200 feet thick (see 21:15-17). Security is being stressed here for no ancient army could storm such a city. Can you imagine walls 1,500 *miles* high? Mount Everest is nearly 30,000 *feet* tall. That's something like 6 miles high, isn't it? These walls are pictured as 230 times the height of Everest!

The City is square, stressing stability, and it's modeled on the Holy of Holies, which was a square. And Israel encamped in a square with the Tabernacle where God dwelled at the center of that square. The Tabernacle was structured as a series of squares.

But it isn't just stable and secure it is glorious, with golden streets, walls of precious gems and twelve gates that are a single pearl each. There are twelve gates with twelve angels on guard, the names of the twelve tribes of Israel are on the gates and there are twelve foundations on which are written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (21:12-14 and compare Ephesians 2:20). God and the Christ dwell within (21:22) and the Tree of Life is there and gives twelve kinds of fruit twelve times a year (22:2). The City gives light to the nations of the world (21:24) and the leaves from its Tree of Life give healing to the nations. The Tree of Life makes us think of the Garden of Eden. The river flowing out of the City (22:1) that benefits the earth reminds us of the river that flowed out of the Garden to water the earth (see Genesis 2:8-14 and Ezekiel 47:1-12).

Everything about this City is in contrast to the evil City of chapter 18. Everything about this City and Woman is in contrast to the Woman and City of chapter 17-18. This City is good for the nations and the other is bad for them. This City has God dwelling in it and the other has all kinds of abominations dwelling in it. This City is eternal and glorious and the other is destroyed by burning and is brought to the ground.

Chapter 18 gives a picture of the evil City when the whole story is told. Chapters 21 and 22 give a picture of the glorious City when the whole story is told. The evil City had its day of glory and power but God finally judges it—it is destroyed and humiliated. The glorious City has been trampled on (see 11:2) but it is finally vindicated and made to triumph.

The description of the glorious City in chapters 21-22 is a description of the triumphant People of God—after they have come through their sore years under the Roman oppressor.

The Two Witnesses (11:3-12)

The two Witnesses are the People of God! (Later, see the brief remarks on the number "two".) The description of the two Witnesses is taken mainly from the Old Testament. The men on whom they are modeled include Moses and Aaron, Elijah and Elisha, and Zerubabel and Joshua son of Jozadek (see this in 11:4-6). Just a quick glance at the careers of these men shows that they're God's representatives in an ungodly world and in troublous times. Moses and Aaron smote the earth with plagues, Elijah and Elisha called fire down out of heaven, Elijah is taken up into heaven, and Zerubabel and Joshua were the two light-bearers that stood before the Lord in Zechariah 4:11-14.

The two Witnesses successfully proclaim the word of God while dressed in sackcloth (11:3). In this vision they have the credentials (miraculous signs) that prove they are indeed God's representatives and they have the sackcloth that says they are God's witnesses during times of trouble. Though clothed in sackcloth they can't be stopped. That's in the first scene.

In the second scene describing their work they are attacked and killed (11:7). Their enemies rejoice in what seems like a clear victory over their tormentors (11:7-10). After all, their bodies lie dead for three and a half days (they must surely be dead). But the two Witnesses are raised (like their Master) and are taken up into heaven (11:11-12).

Again the experience of the Church is being imaged. The Witnesses wear sackcloth so they're in trouble but they still carry out their mission and can't be stopped. They are killed but they can't be made to stay dead. (Compare Paul's description of the church under hardship in 2 Corinthians 4:7-10 and 6:4-10, especially 6:9.)

Summary: In this section the People of God are pictured for us in three images: a glorious Woman, a glorious City, and two Witnesses. The Woman is persecuted but protected. Enemy soldiers march in the glorious City but the citadel (11:2) is never taken. The Witnesses wear sackcloth and are slain but no one can keep them from completing their mission and death can't hold them. You will remember that the 144,000 go through the great tribulation but come out dressed for a Jewish Tabernacle feast—all glory and rejoicing. Note that in all this there is pain but protection, trouble but triumph. This trouble and triumph theme runs throughout the book.

Exercises for Lesson Four

Underline the scripture that teaches ...

1. The gates of hell can't prevail against the Church.
Genesis 3:1-5 Philippians 2:15 **Matthew 16:18**
2. The glorious City of Revelation is God's people.
Revelation 21:15-17 **Revelation 21:9-10** Revelation 22:10
3. Despite wearing mourners clothing, the two Witnesses can't be stopped or silenced.
Revelation 11:3 Revelation 21:9 Revelation 11:11-12
4. The wife of the Lamb is the Church, God's people.
Revelation 21:24 Revelation 1:1 **Ephesians 5:25-32**
5. The glorious City brings light to the nations of the earth.
Matthew 5:14-16 Revelation 12:1 **Revelation 21:24**

Complete the following statements.

1. Everything about this City and Woman **is in contrast to the Woman and City of chapter 17-18.**

2. When the image of a woman is used, **the people are viewed as a whole (as distinct from individuals).**

3. The number twelve (**see later**) **is the number of God's people.** _____
4. This is what we find in Exodus 1:15-16 **when the Egyptian king sought the death of the newly born.**

5. The Holy City is described as a **bride adorned for her husband (21:2).** _____
6. The men on whom they are modeled include **Moses and Aaron, Elijah and Elisha, and Zerubabel and Joshua son of Jozadek (see this in 11:4-6).** _____

Check off each of the following references after you have read it.

Figurative description of humiliation of Babylon

_____ Isaiah 47:1,5,7,8

The Church as the wife of Christ

_____ Ephesians 5:25-32

Woman/Seed opposed by Serpent

_____ Genesis 3:1-5,14,15

Prophets as TWO witnesses/light-bearers

_____ Zechariah 4:11-14

The people of God as light-bearers

_____ Matthew 5:14-16

The Church as the New Jerusalem

_____ Revelation 21:9-27

True or False?

1. The two Witnesses preach in kingly garments. **__F__**
2. The central theme of Revelation is that God's people suffer under Rome. **__F/T__**
3. The glorious Woman of Revelation 12 is the people of God as a whole. **__T__**
4. The glorious City of Revelation 21 symbolizes Heaven. **__F__**
5. A "woman" is a common symbol in Scripture speaking of a nation or a people. **__T__**
6. Throughout the centuries the Devil has shown himself in various nations persecuting God's people. **__T__**
7. The Church of Jesus Christ can never be finally defeated. **__T__**
8. Two great cities are contrasted with each other in the book of Revelation – one evil, one good. **__T__**
9. The number twelve is the number of God's people in the book of Revelation. **__T__**