

Christ's ascension to, and reign from, heaven? "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days" (6). Thus the 1,260 days start upon Christ's ascension and session at God's right hand.

Moreover, with Christ's ascension to His throne, Satan is cast out of heaven (9-10, 13) and persecutes the woman for 3 ½ times or years (13-14). Clearly, the 1,260 days and the 3 ½ years or times start at the same time, namely, with Christ's enthronement in heaven.

When do the 1,260 days or 3 ½ times or years end? Well, when does the devil cease attacking the woman, the church? When does God no longer need to protect, feed and nourish the woman, His church, from the attacks of Satan? The answer is at the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, when the devil will be cast into the lake of fire and the whole catholic or universal church will be glorified!

We see the same truth regarding the end of the 1,260 days or 42 months or 3 ½ times in Revelation 11. The two witnesses give their testimony for 1,260 days (3). After this comes the eternal reign of Christ over all kingdoms in the new heaven and the new earth (15), which follows the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment, including God's rewarding His saints (18). From a study of the 1,260 days in Revelation 11, again we see that our period ends with the bodily return of the incarnate Son of God.

Putting all this together, when do the 1,260 days or 42 months or 3 ½ times in Revelation 11-13 start? With the Lord's ascension and session. When does this period end? With Christ's return, when "the kingdoms of this world [shall] become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (11:15).

In Christological terms, the 1,260 days or 42 months or 3 ½ times run from Christ's session at God's right hand to His bodily return at the end of the age. In terms of years, this period is from about AD 33 to the present day and onwards, a time of almost 2,000 years so far. In other words, the 1,260 days or 42 months or 3 ½ times are co-extensive with the "last days," another important biblical term for the time between Christ's enthronement in heaven and His return on the clouds.

Thus we have the answer to the question, Are the 1,260 days or 42 months or 3 ½ times literal or symbolic? Obviously, they are not literal since a lot more time than 42 months have elapsed since Christ ascended to heaven! This period is symbolic, as one would expect in a book which tells us in its very first verse that the truth that it contains is "signified," that is, presented in sign form (1:1). This is also in keeping with the other symbolic numbers in this last book of the Bible, like the 24 elders, the 7 seals and trumpets and vials, the 144,000 saints, etc.

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The Forty-Two Months

A lot of people wonder about the 42 months spoken of in the book of Revelation (11:2; 13:5). Are they literal or are they symbolic? When do they begin? When do they end?

Chapters 11-13 of Revelation contain five references to various periods of time, which I will quote in the order of their appearance in the inspired text. "But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months" (11:2). "And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth" (11:3). "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days" (12:6). "And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent" (12:14). "And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months" (13:5).

You will notice that in these three chapters, we have the following three temporal terms: 1,260 days, mentioned twice (11:3; 12:6); 42 months, also mentioned twice (11:2; 13:5); a time, times and half a time, mentioned once (12:14).

Let us look carefully at these three temporal periods. First, if we reckon that there are 30 days in a month, how many days are there in 42 months? The answer is 1,260 days! Second, 42 months are how many years? Since there are 12 months in a year, 42 months are 3 ½ years, which is the equivalent of "a time [1], and times [2], and half a time [½]" (12:14), for $1 + 2 + \frac{1}{2} = 3 \frac{1}{2}$. Thus these three time periods are the same! The 1,260 days are equivalent to 42 months, which are equivalent to 3 ½ years or times.

Is there any indication in Revelation 11-13 that these three time periods are the same and coextensive? Yes. First, in Revelation 11, the 42 months are mentioned in verse 2 and the very next verse refers to the 1,260 days (3). Second, in Revelation 12, the woman or church in her place in the wilderness is fed for 1,260 days (6) and, in a parallel statement, we are informed that the woman in her place in the wilderness is "nourished for a time, and times, and half at time," that is, 3 ½ times or 3 ½ years (14).

Having established that the 1,260 days are the 42 months, which are the 3 ½ years or 3 ½ times, we need to find out when they start and when they end.

In Revelation 12, the woman brings forth a male who is to rule the nations, Jesus Christ, who ascends to His throne in heaven (5). What happens the woman upon

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The Theodicy (1)

“We are often rightly told that God will not remember our sins and has removed them from us to an infinite distance (as far as the east is from the west) and buried them in the deepest sea. So how can those same sins be brought out into the open on the judgment day, with every believer being rewarded according to his works? Are our sins not to be brought up again as they are all atoned for and simply our works judged? Because surely the quality of the works will expose the sin inherent in them?”

I have given my answer to the reader’s question the title, “The Theodicy.” It is a term almost unknown in our day, being rarely, if ever, heard in any churches or found in any theological books and writings. That is sad. It is an important theological word that ought to be known by anyone who claims to be a Calvinist or a believer in the Reformed faith. Its demise in the church’s theological vocabulary is due to the fact that theology today is depressingly man-centred and no longer God-centred. The term “theodicy” directs our thoughts and theologizing to God, not to man.

The word means, literally, “the justification of God.” It refers to the final judgment when the end of this present world comes with the return of Christ. The theodicy is another word for the vindication of God in the judgment day when all men appear before the judgment seat of Christ. It does not concentrate on the judgment day as such but it points to the purpose for which all men need to be judged.

After all, there are many judgment days and many ways in which God judges men. God judges every deed of every man at every moment of this life. Scripture calls this judgment of God “conscience.” God testifies in every man’s conscience whether He approves of what a person does or whether He disapproves. God is judging that man not only but is informing that man of His judgment.

Every man is judged at the moment of his death, for at death he goes immediately to heaven or to hell. That too is the execution of God’s judgment.

But one all-important thing has not yet taken place: the justification of God in all His works, that is, the theodicy. Throughout the ages, men spin their own wicked theories about God to deny His judgment. At bottom, the problem is that they do not want God to have all the glory—yes, *all* the glory. So they whine about the fact that eternal predestination cannot be true and that it makes God unjust. This is especially true of reprobation. “How can it be true,” they say, “that a merciful God throws sinners into hell? In fact, how can there be a hell with its everlasting suffering, if God loves all men. How can God ignore all the good deeds the wicked do and send a man to hell for giving millions to charitable institutions? How can a person possibly say that a sinner is going to hell when he has never had a chance to accept Christ?” One would think they are more merciful and righteous than God Himself!

It is the same clamour that Paul already knew as an objection to sovereign predestination: “Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will” (Rom. 9:19)? The answer to this question is, indeed, at least in the first place,

“Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?” (20).

It is basically the same answer Jehovah gave to Job when he searched for an answer from God for his terrible afflictions: “Who do you think you are, Job? Do you think that I have to justify what I do? Do you, less than a speck of dust, have any business at all summoning me to the dock to explain what I do so as to justify myself?” When Job heard that, he cried out, “Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not ... I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:3, 5-6).

Do men fall on their faces next to Job and repeat his words that come as an agonizing cry out of their hearts? Oh, no. They rather join hands with the Arminians who were condemned by the Synod of Dordt. The Arminians claim that the doctrine of God’s sovereignty in election and reprobation make Him “the author of sin, unjust, tyrannical, hypocritical ... that it renders men carnally secure, since they are persuaded by it that nothing can hinder the salvation of the elect, let them live as they please; and, therefore, that they may safely perpetrate every species of the most atrocious crimes; and that, if the reprobate should even perform truly all the works of the saints, their obedience would not in the least contribute to their salvation ... that many children of the faithful are torn, guiltless, from their mothers’ breasts and tyrannically plunged into hell.”

Although these terrible charges against the truth were made four hundred years ago and although our Reformed fathers, in the “Conclusion” to the *Canons of Dordrecht*, “not only do not acknowledge, but even detest [them] with their whole soul,” people and theologians say the same things against the truth today. John Wesley, a heretic of the first class, made the same railing accusations, yet he is hailed today by supposedly Reformed theologians as the epitome of a Christian!

Does anyone really think that the eternal God of heaven who hears all these slanders against Him will let them pass? God is a jealous God. He will justify himself and show the entire world that He is good and righteous, and that all men are liars. Even Satan and his black host of demons will have to cringe in fear when they stand before the judgment seat of Christ and hear the great God justify all He has done in history. Demons, pompous theologians, so-called shepherds of the sheep, those admired and extolled by the ungodly, all without exception, shall bow their knees and “confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10-11).

Those who are opposed to the truth of the sovereign God should ponder this: What are you going to say to the exalted Christ when He thunders from His great white throne, “Why did you not uphold My truth?”

The Most High will publicly, before the whole world, justify all He did as the sovereign God. How God justifies Himself in the theodicy is the answer to the question asked by the reader. We shall return to it next time, the Lord willing. *Prof. Hanko*