

Revelation Chapter 12

Verses 1-2: Chapters 12 - 14 are explanatory prophecies that describe some of the major personages and movements of the latter half of the Tribulation period. The “woman” represents Israel, and her “child” is Christ, the Messiah (compare 12:5; Isa. 7:14; 9:6; 66:7-8; Micah 5:2; Rom. 9:4-5).

Although (chapter 11:15), records the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the effects it produces are not described until chapters 15 through 18. Chapters 12 to 14 restates or summarizes that same period, but describing events from Satan's vantage point. Including taking the readers back to the original rebellion as Satan is cast to the earth along with one third of the angels (demons).

The woman is not the church, since the church did not bring forth Christ, but rather He brought forth the church. Her identification as the persecuted Jewish saints clearly proves that the church is not on earth during the Tribulation period. The “sun” depicts her as God’s chosen nation. The “moon under her feet” alludes to God’s promise of dominion, and the “crown of twelve stars” pictures royalty and relates to the 12 tribes of Israel. The “birth” pains refer to the period before the birth of Christ when Israel was waiting for redemption by the Messiah (compare Rom. 8:22-23).

Revelation 12:1 "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:"

“Wonder”: A symbol pointing to something else. This is the first of 7 signs in the last half of the Great Revelation (compare verses 3; 13:13-14; 15:1; 16:14; 19:20).

“A woman”: Not an actual woman, but a symbolic representation of Israel, pictured in the Old Testament as the wife of God (Isa. 54:5-6; Jer. 3:6-8; 31:32; Ezek. 16:32; Hosea 2:16). Three other symbolic women appear in Revelation:

- (1) Jezebel, who represents paganism (2:20);
- (2) The scarlet woman (17:3-6), symbolizing the apostate church; and
- (3) The wife of the Lamb (19:7), symbolizing the true church.

The woman represents Israel, and her child is Christ; the Messiah (12:5; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; 66:7.8; Micah 5:2; Romans 9:4-5).

“Clothed with the sun ... moon under her feet ... twelve stars” (compare Gen. 37:9-11). Being clothed with the sun speaks of the glory, dignity, and exalted status of Israel, the people of promise who will be saved and given a kingdom. The picture of the moon under her feet possibly describes God’s covenant relationship with Israel, since new moons were associated with worship (1 Chron. 23:31; 2 Chron. 2:4; 8:13; Ezra 3:5; Psalm 81:3). The 12 stars represent the 12 tribes of Israel.

The sun reflects redeemed Israel's unique glory, brilliance and dignity because of her exalted status and shows her as God's chosen nation.

The moon under her feet alludes to God's promise of dominion, and the crown of twelve stars' pictures royalty and relates to the 12 tribes of Israel. Go to (Genesis 37:9-11), and read about the dream Joseph had about the sun, moon and 11 stars which were bowing down to Joseph (who was the 12th).

Though this scene opens in heaven, it will quickly move to the earth.

Revelation 12:2 "And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered."

“Cried, travailing in birth”: Israel, often pictured as a mother giving birth (compare Isa. 26:17-18, 54:1; 66:7-12; Hosea 13:13; Micah 4:10; 5:2-3; Matt. 24:8), had agonized and suffered for centuries, longing for the Messiah to come and destroy Satan, sin and death, and usher in the kingdom.

Women, who have had children, know that there is pain involved in birth. This Scripture is spiritually speaking of the birth of Jesus and of Christianity.

The birth pains refer to the period before the birth of Christ when Israel was waiting for redemption by the Messiah (Rom. 8:22-23).

Verses 3-4: The “dragon” is identified as Satan (in verse 9). His “red” color shows his murderous character (compare John 8:44). His “seven heads” and “seven crowns” depict the completeness and universality of his power and influence (but compare Psalm 74:14). His “ten horns” show Satan’s connection with the fourth beast (of Daniel 7:7, 24), and with the Beast from the sea (in chapter 13 of Revelation). The “third part of the stars of heaven” are probably the fallen angels who followed Satan in his original rebellion against God (compare Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:12-16; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). At the time of the birth of Christ, Satan was ready to kill Him (compare Matt. 2:13-18).

Revelation 12:3 "And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads."

“Great red dragon”: The woman’s mortal enemy is Satan, who appears as a dragon 13 times in this book (compare verses 9; 20:2). Red speaks of bloodshed (compare John 8:44).

We see here this "red dragon". This is the devil, and he is shown red all over to show his murderous and destructive personality. This is the only place in the New Testament that dragon is used. Here it is not a literal "dragon", but a figure of Satan.

We see here "ten horns" which symbolize world power. Here, too, we can assume these world powers oppose the Christians and Jesus' church.

“Seven heads ... ten horns ... seven crowns”: Figurative language depicting Satan’s domination of 7 past worldly kingdoms and 10 future kingdoms (compare Dan. 7:7, 20, 24; see notes on 13:1; 17:9-10). Satan has and will rule the world until the seventh trumpet blows (11:15). He has inflicted relentless pain on Israel (Dan. 8:24), desiring to kill the woman before she could bring forth the child that would destroy him (see notes on Esther 3:6-15).

These seven are heads of evil governments. This world power, through these earthly kingdoms, comes from Satan himself. The seven crowned heads mean universal rule, and the ten horns mean world power to the utmost.

Five emperors had come and gone by the Apostle John's time; one ruled during his time; and the seventh represents the Antichrist to come. We will get into more on this in a later chapter about the 6 empires that have come, which is most interesting.

His ten horns show Satan's connection with the fourth beast of (Daniel 7:7, 24), and with the Beast from the sea (in Rev. chapter 13).

Revelation 12:4 "And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born."

The third part of the stars of heaven”: Satan’s original rebellion (compare Isa. 14:12ff; Ezek. 28:11ff), resulted in one-third of the angelic host joining his insurrection and becoming demons.

When John tells us that the devils' tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to earth, he is describing the original demonic uprising against God.

Satan somehow managed to convince a third of all God's angels to join him in his rebellion; these beings we now call "demons" or "fallen angels." They serve Satan and play an important role in the judgments of the Tribulation.

We see here also, the woman about to birth, and this is the birth of Jesus the Christ.

“Devour her child”: Unable to prevent the virgin birth of Christ, Satan tried to kill the child in a general massacre of male children commanded by Herod (Matt. 2:13-18; compare Luke 4:28-29).

Satan used Herod to try to kill Jesus the moment He was born. That was not God's plan, so Jesus was protected until the time of the cross. This also indicates here the birth of the church, which the devil has tried to devour every way he could.

Verses 5-6: The “man child” is Christ, destined to “rule all nations” as the Messiah (compare 19:15; Psalm 2:7-9). He was “caught up unto God, and to his throne” at His ascension into heaven (compare Acts 1:9; 7:55). The “wilderness” represents anywhere outside Palestine. During the last half of the Tribulation period (1260 days, or three and a half years), Israel will take refuge among the Gentile nations, where God will care for her (perhaps through Gentile believers, compare Matt. 25:40). Chronologically (verse 6 occurs after verse 7-12), and is equivalent to (verse 14).

Revelation 12:5 "And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and [to] his throne."

“A man child”: Jesus Christ in His incarnation was of Jewish descent (Matt. 1:1; 2 Tim. 2:8). Despite Satan’s efforts to destroy Israel and the messianic line, Jesus’ birth took place as predicted by the prophets (compare Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Micah 5:2).

This is speaking of Jesus Christ. Jesus was caught up unto God to set on the right hand of God at the resurrection and is currently sitting at the right hand of God. When He returns, Jesus will rule all nations as King of kings and Lord of lords.

During Jesus' earthly, millennium kingdom, this rule is a breaking, and shattering work of judgment.

“Rod of iron”: describes Jesus’ coronation as king over the nations of the world (compare 11:15; 19:15; Psalm 2:6-9).

This “Rod”, is one that cannot be broken and speaks of the resoluteness of Christ's rule. He will swiftly and immediately judge all sin and put down any rebellion.

“Her child was caught up unto God”: Christ’s ascension is in view (Acts 1:9; 2:33; Heb. 1:1-3; 12:2).

Revelation 12:6 "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."

“Wilderness”: God will protect Israel from Satan by hiding her in the wilderness, perhaps in the region of Moab, Ammon and Edom, east of Palestine. Interestingly, those countries will be specifically spared from the Antichrist’s attack against the Holy Land (compare Dan. 11:41).

The woman here is the church. The wilderness represents anywhere outside Palestine.

“A thousand two hundred and threescore days”: At the midpoint of the Tribulation, the Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel, puts a stop to temple worship, sets up the abomination of desolation (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15), and devastates Jerusalem (11:2). At that time, many Jews flee for their lives (Matt. 24:16ff). God will preserve them during the last 1260 days (42 months; 3-1/2 years), constituting the Great Tribulation (see notes on 3:10; 6:1, 9).

During the last half of the Great Tribulation period, Israel will take refuge among the Gentile nations, where God will care for her (perhaps through the Gentile believers).

God will frustrate Satan's attempt to destroy Israel during the Tribulation and will hide His people just as Jesus stated (in Matthew chapter 24:15-21).

The world government, and even part of the church world, is leaning more and more to elevating ourselves to the point of making us god. You see, secular humanism and the New Age Movement both elevate mankind to Godhood. These are two very dangerous things to do. This is the very reason Lucifer was tossed out of heaven.

Verses 7-9: The vision of "war in heaven" anticipates Satan's exclusion from "heaven" and his restriction to the "earth" during the last half during the Great Tribulation. "Michael" the archangel is the leader of God's holy angels (compare Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9). Satan is the chief of the fallen angels. At the middle of the Tribulation period, God will empower Michael and his forces to "cast" Satan and his forces "out" of access to heaven, so that Satan must thereafter confine his activities to the earthly sphere.

Revelation 12:7 "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,"

"War in heaven": The tumultuous events on earth during the Tribulation find their counterpart in heaven. A state of war has existed since the fall of Satan (compare verse 4, compare Dan. 10:13; Jude 9). Something will intensify that warfare, possibly the raptured saints passing through the realm of the prince of the power of the air (compare Eph. 2:2).

I really believe that Michael is a very high-up angel directly under Jesus' command. The dragon here is Lucifer, which was an evil archangel.

Revelation 12:8 "And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven."

The vision of war in heaven anticipates Satan's exclusion from "heaven" and his restriction to the earth during the last half of the Great Tribulation, so that Satan must thereafter confine his activities to the earthly sphere. Michael the archangel is the leader of God's holy angels (Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9).

I believe there is an order of command in heaven as there is here on the earth. We see here, that not only the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is being attacked here on the earth, but that there is war in heaven as well. Here we see the defeat of Satan to such an extent that he is not allowed in heaven any more, not even to accuse the believers.

His defeat on the earth is complete as well. His doom was sealed when Jesus died on the cross and was resurrected.

Revelation Chapter 12 Questions

1. In verse 1, what was the wonder that appeared in heaven?
2. What does the sun symbolize here?
3. What does the moon symbolize?
4. Who are the stars?
5. This woman is symbolic of whom?
6. Where is the Christians' home?
7. What kind of birth is meant in verse 2?
8. Who had the seven heads and ten horns?
9. Why was his color red?
10. What do the seven heads mean?
11. What do the ten horns mean?
12. What did the seven crowns indicate?
13. This dragon is symbolic of whom?
14. What Old Testament prophetic book mentions this also?
15. This powerful evil movement attacks whom?
16. In verse 4, the 1/3 part of the stars are who?
17. Why did the dragon stand before the woman who was ready to be delivered?
18. What was Satan's name in heaven?
19. What did the 1/3 of the angels who followed the devil become?
20. Who did Satan use to try to kill the Christ child?
21. Why might your church not be under attack of the devil?
22. How was the man child to rule the nations?
23. Where was He caught up to?
24. Who will Jesus be known as when He rules with the rod of iron?

25. Where did the woman flee to?
26. Who is the woman in verse 6?
27. What is this period of 3 1/2 years called?
28. Not only the world, but a segment of the church is leaning toward making themselves whom?
29. Name two false teachings that are dangerous.
30. Who fought against the dragon?
31. Who lost?
32. What is the author's personal belief about Michael?
33. When was Satan's doom sealed?
34. In John 17:14-15, it is speaking of the church. Tell me in your own words who the church consists of.