

Love Community Baptist Church

Wednesday Night Virtual Bible Study

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Revelation – Chapter 12 and 13

THE WOMAN, THE CHILD, AND THE DRAGON

The woman.

(Revelation 12:1) The woman is described in celestial images.

Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.

This is the first of seven signs that John relates, and is described as a great sign (mega semeion). In Revelation chapters 12, 13, and 14 the main figures of the Great Tribulation are described, and this great sign introduces the first of the seven:

The woman, representing Israel.

The dragon, representing Satan.

The man-child, referring to Jesus.

The angel Michael, head of the angelic host.

The offspring of the woman, representing Gentiles who come to faith in the Tribulation.

The beast out of the sea, representing the antichrist.

The beast out of the earth, representing the false prophet who promotes the antichrist.

A woman clothed with the sun: Because John plainly said this is a sign, we don't expect this woman to appear literally on the earth. God will use this sign to communicate something to John and to us. Women often represent religious systems in Revelation.

- Jezebel is associated with a religious system promoting false teaching (Revelation 2:20).
- The Great Harlot is associated with false religion (Revelation 17:2).
- The Bride is associated with the church (Revelation 19:7-8).

This woman has been associated with many different religious ideas. Roman Catholics claim this woman is Mary, pictured as the "Queen of Heaven." Mary Baker Eddy (the founder of Christian Science) said she was this woman.

- It is common in Roman Catholic art to represent Mary as standing on a crescent moon with twelve stars around her head.

Scripturally, this woman clothed with the sun should be identified with Israel, according to Joseph's dream (Genesis 37:9-11). In that dream, the sun represented Jacob, the moon represented Joseph's mother Rachel, and the eleven stars were the sons of Israel which bowed down to Joseph. In this sign with twelve stars, Joseph is now among the other tribes of Israel.

- In other Old Testament passages, Israel (or Zion or Jerusalem) is often represented as a woman (Isaiah 54:1-6, Jeremiah 3:20, Ezekiel 16:8-14, and Hosea 2:19-20).

(Revelation 12:2) The woman gives birth.

Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.

Later in the chapter, it is clear that this child born of Israel is Jesus (She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron, Revelation 12:5).

The pain described refers to the travail of Israel at the time of Jesus' birth (under Roman occupation and oppression).

The dragon.

(Revelation 12:3) A fearful, powerful dragon appears.

And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.

Another sign appeared in heaven: Again, we are reminded that this is a sign. The creature here was not literally a great, fiery red dragon, but the dragon represented his nature and character.

This dragon had great power (seven heads and ten horns) and claimed royal authority (seven diadems). The crowns represent his presumptive claims of royal authority against the true King. He wants to be considered a king.

- “From the similar description given in 13:1 and the parallel references in Daniel 7:7-8, 2, it is clear that the revived Roman Empire is in view... The seven heads and ten horns refer to the original ten kingdoms of which three were subdued by the little horn of Daniel 7:8, who is to be identified with the world ruler of the great tribulation who reigns over the revived Roman Empire.” (Walvoord)

(Revelation 12:4) The dragon looks to the earth.

His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven: Many believe this describes one-third of the angelic host in league with Satan (his angels of Revelation 12:9). This army of angelic beings in league with Satan makes up the world of demonic spirits.

The attempt to devour her Child was initially fulfilled by Herod's attempts to kill Jesus as a child (Matthew 2:16-18). It was also fulfilled throughout Jesus' life as Satan attacked Him (John 8:58-59 and Mark 4:35-41).

The child.

(Revelation 12:5) Jesus' ministry is described by its earthly beginning and end.

She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

Clearly, this refers to Jesus Christ, the Messiah. He rules the world with a rod of iron (Psalm 2:9 and Revelation 19:15).

She bore a male Child: This refers to Jesus' birth. Rule all nations with a rod of iron refers to the triumphant return of Jesus. By stating the starting point and ending point of Jesus' earthly work, John alluded to all that stood in between.

This is obviously Jesus. This means that the woman of Revelation 12:1 cannot be the church, because Jesus "gives birth" to the church, not the other way around. The woman must therefore either be Mary or Israel, the only two "women" who could have "given birth" to Jesus. The rest of Revelation 12 will demonstrate that this woman is Israel, not Mary.

(Revelation 12:6) The woman in the wilderness.

Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

Persecuted by the dragon, the woman is protected by God in a prepared place for **one thousand two hundred and sixty days**.

- This helps us to understand with certainty that the woman is Israel and not Mary. How could Mary possibly flee into the wilderness in this way?

One thousand two hundred and sixty days: This reference to a three and one-half year period connects these events with the final seven years of the Daniel 9 prophecy. Since Revelation 12:5 describes the ascension of Jesus, and Revelation 12:6 describes yet-to-occur events in the 70th week of Daniel, between these two verses lies hundreds of years (our current period). This obvious "near-far" break in time is typical of prophecy. Daniel's seventy week prophecy has such a break (Daniel 9:24-27).

Some believe this place in the wilderness is the rock city of Petra, south of the Dead Sea. Reportedly, Christian businessmen have stocked the place with food and evangelistic tracts written in Hebrew.

Prepared uses the same ancient Greek word Jesus used in I go to prepare a place for you (John 14:2-3). This demonstrates that God's careful planning works on earth as well as in heaven.

Conflict in heaven.

(Revelation 12:7-8) War between Michael and the dragon.

And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.

At the mid-point of the great tribulation, God will turn the tide against Satan — first in heaven, then on earth. A battle will take place that will deny Satan access to heaven.

Michael and his angels: Some individuals and groups (such as the Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses) insist on saying that Michael is actually Jesus. This is wrong on every count.

- Some say Michael must be Jesus, because he has his angels. But if Satan — a fallen angelic being — has his angels (Revelation 12:7), can't Michael — an unfallen angelic being — have his angels?

Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought: This is a dramatic scene of battle between good angels and bad angels.; faithful angels and fallen angels.

- Who fights in this battle? This is truly a battle between equals. The dragon represents Satan (Revelation 12:9), and Satan is not the counterpart of God — God has no counterpart. If anyone, Satan is the counterpart of Michael, who seems to be the chief angel opposite this chief of fallen angels.

- Why is the battle fought? In a previous scene of conflict between Michael and Satan (Jude 9), Satan wanted to prevent the resurrection and glorification of Moses, because he knew God had plans for the resurrected and glorified Moses (Luke 9:30-31). Here is another occasion where Satan wants to get in the way of God's plan for the end-times.
- When is this battle fought? This battle occurs at the mid-point of the seven-year period, as described by Daniel. At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered. (Daniel 12:1)
- How is this battle fought? We know this is a real fight; but is it a material or a spiritual battle? Our battle with Satan and his demons is spiritual, fought on the battleground of truth and deception, of fear and faith (Ephesians 6:12). In regard to material attacks against the believer, Satan and his demons were disarmed at the cross (Colossians 2:15). Among angels, it is possible that there is a material battle to be fought in a way we can only imagine.

Nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer: This shows us that up until this happens (at the mid-point of Daniel's 70th week), Satan does have access to heaven, where he accuses God's people before the throne (Job 1:6-12, Revelation 12:10).

- It troubles some to think that Satan has access to heaven, because of the mistaken teaching that God can allow nothing unholy in His presence. But the Bible clearly says that while Satan appears on earth (Luke 4:1-13), and describes him as the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2), it also says that Satan has access to heaven, where he accuses God's people before the throne (Job 1:6-12).

(Revelation 12:9) Satan and his angels are cast out of heaven.

So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

This single verse uses many different titles for our spiritual enemy, including Dragon, serpent of old, the Devil, Satan, and he who deceives the whole world. These titles describe Satan as vicious, an accuser, an adversary, and a deceiver.

He was cast to the earth: The Bible describes four different falls of Satan. Revelation 12:9 describes the second of these four falls.

- From glorified to profane (Ezekiel 28:14-16).
- From having access to heaven (Job 1:12, 1 Kings 22:21, Zechariah 3:1) to restriction to the earth (Revelation 12).
- From the earth to bondage in the bottomless pit for 1,000 years (Revelation 20).
- From the pit to the lake of fire (Revelation 20).

In Luke 10:18, Jesus said "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." This refers either to the first fall of Satan (from glorified to profane), or it is a prophetic look ahead to the second fall at the mid-point of the seven year tribulation period.

His angels were cast out with him: This indicates that demonic spirits are indeed fallen angels, those who joined with Satan in His rebellion against God. These are "his angels."

- These angels are also the same as the third of the stars of heaven described in Revelation 12:4. Since Satan only drew a third of the stars of heaven, it means that two-thirds of the angels remained faithful to God. It's comforting to know that faithful angels outnumber fallen angels two to one.

(Revelation 12:10-12) A joyful declaration in heaven.

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.”

Whoever is behind this loud voice, it is some representative of redeemed humanity — not an angel or God — because the voice speaks of the accuser of our brethren.

Satan’s work of accusing only ends here, when he is cast out from his access to heaven. Today, we have (and need) an intercessor and advocate (Hebrews 7:25, and 1 John 2:1).

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death: This tells us three keys to the saint’s victory over Satan.

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb: The blood overcomes Satan’s accusations. Those accusations mean nothing against us because Jesus has already paid the penalty our sins deserved. We may be even worse than Satan’s accusations, but we are still made righteous by the work of Jesus on the cross (Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14, and Hebrews 9:14).

- Although, it is important to say that we should not regard the blood of Jesus in a superstitious manner. It is not a magical potion, nor is it the literal blood of Jesus, literally applied that saves or cleanses us. If that were so, then His Roman executioners, splattered with His blood, would have been automatically saved, and the actual number of molecules of Jesus’ literal blood would limit the number of people who could be saved. The blood speaks to us of the real, physical death of Jesus Christ in our place, on our behalf, before God. That literal death in our place, and the literal judgment He bore on our behalf, is what saves us.
- By the blood emphasizes the death of Jesus. He did not only suffer, He died. Of the Lamb emphasizes the substitutionary work of His death, because the Passover Lamb died as a substitute for others.
- It works because the work of Jesus on the cross for us is the ultimate demonstration of God’s love (Romans 5:8), and a constant remembrance of the blood of the Lamb assures us that every fear Satan whispers into our mind is a lie.

They overcame him... by the word of their testimony: The word of their testimony overcomes Satan’s deception. Knowing and remembering the work of God in their life protects them against Satan’s deceptions. As faithful witnesses, they have a testimony to bear — and because they know what they have seen and heard and experienced from God, they cannot be deceived by Satan’s lies telling them it isn’t true (as the testimony of the man born blind in John 9:25).

They overcame him... they did not love their lives to the death: Loving not their lives overcomes Satan’s violence. If they do not cling to their own earthly lives, then there really is no threat Satan can bring against them. If they believe to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Philippians 1:21), then how can Satan’s violence against them be effective?

- The ancient Greek word for love here is agape, which speaks of a self-sacrificing, decision-based love. It is up to each one of us to choose: Will we love our lives to the death? Will our physical lives be the most precious thing to us, or will we find our life by losing it for Jesus? (Mark 8:35)

Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Heaven rejoices at the eviction of Satan. But heaven’s gain is the earth’s loss: Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and sea!

Satan's power is real and terrifying, but not because he is triumphant, but because he knows he is beaten and has a short time left. He is like a wounded, cornered animal that fights ferociously.

- Satan might give up his fight against God and humanity made in God's image, except for the fact that he is utterly depraved, and probably insane in some way; Satan may have deceived even himself into thinking that he has a chance. Our rebellion against God makes even less sense than Satan's rebellion does.

Conflict on the earth.

(Revelation 12:13-16) Satan attacks the woman, and God protects her.

Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.

Some teach that the woman is a symbol representing all the people of God, including faithful Israel and the church. They use this to advance the idea that the church is here during the tribulation period. But if the woman represents all the people of God (the church and faithful Israel), then who are the rest of her offspring described in Revelation 12:17? It is better to see her as Israel in general or Messianic Jews in particular.

- Why does Satan attack the Jewish people? This is a question for all history, not only for the Great Tribulation. The reason is because from the time of Abraham, Israel holds a critical role in God's plan of redemption. First, it was in bringing forth the Messiah and Redeemer. Then, it was in the fulfillment of His plan, because Jesus promised that the Jewish people would exist and welcome Him when He returns in glory to this world (Matthew 23:39). If Satan succeeds in destroying the Jewish people, then God's eternal plan is in some way thwarted.

But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place: Eagle's Wings are an emblem from the Exodus deliverance (Exodus 19:4), another way of connecting these people with Israel.

Where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time: This is another reference to a three and one-half year period, indicating that these events — this dramatic persecution of Israel — takes place during the 70th week of Daniel 9.

So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman: The fury poured out against Israel after the abomination of desolation (marking the half-way point of the 70th week of Daniel) was spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 24:15-22, and spoken of in distinctly Jewish terms (housetop... pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath). This passage in Revelation describes the fury that Jesus told them to flee.

This passage also describes God's ultimate protection of Israel from the fury of Satan and his antichrist in the great tribulation.

- As it says in Isaiah 59:19, When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him.

(Revelation 12:17) The wrath of the dragon is focused against God's people.

And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

This may refer to Israel (the woman) and Gentiles who come to faith in Jesus during the Great Tribulation (the rest of her offspring). These two groups are particular targets of Satan and his antichrist's persecution in the last days.

This either begins or continues the fierce persecution of all those who would not submit to and worship this great Satanic dictator. The martyrs of this period were shown in Revelation 6:9-11 and Revelation 7:9-17.