

## Wonders And Wars

(Revelation 12:1-17)

Intro: Revelation chapters 12—14 comprise another parenthetical section that introduces Seven Great Personages of the Tribulation, particularly of the final 3 ½ years, generally referred to as the Great Tribulation. These seven personages of 12:1–14:20 are as follows: (1) the woman clothed with the sun, represents the nation Israel (vv. 1-2); (2) the great red dragon, represents Satan (vv. 3-4); (3) the male child, is the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 5); (4) the archangel Michael and his angels wage war against the dragon and banish him to the earth (vv. 7-12); (5) the remnant of the woman, is regenerate Israel (12:17); (6) the beast out of the sea, the world dictator—Antichrist (13:1-10); (7) the beast out of the earth, the false prophet and religious leader of the world (13:11-17). C. I. Scofield

Revelation you will recall contains more symbols than any other book in the Bible. Revelation 12 is filled with symbols. Symbols are used as a vehicle for divine revelation. We don't need to be Bible scholars to be able to decode these divine symbols. *Rather, as a principle of first importance in biblical interpretation, we must remember that the meaning to every symbol used in Revelation is explained or alluded to either in the immediate context, or somewhere else in the Bible.*

Chapter 12 is not only filled with symbols, it also provides us with insights into the warfare that has gone on between Satan and God ever since Satan attempted to rebel against his Creator in the eternal ages past. The warfare described here is primarily a spiritual conflict involving angelic forces, particularly, those of Michael and his angels against Satan and the fallen angels or the demonic world under Satan's authority. While Satan often employs human means to accomplish his purposes (as with the persecution of Israel), what we must always keep in mind, as this chapter reinforces, is that behind the scenes is our arch enemy, Satan and his demonic forces. The angelic warfare of this chapter occurs first on earth (12:1-6), then in heaven (12:7-12), and back on earth again (12:13-17).

### **The First Personage: *A Woman Clothed With The Sun* (vv. 1-2)**

vv. 1-2 And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; 2 and she was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth.

The first great personage John sees is a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on her head. He describes the woman as a great sign or wonder. This woman is symbolic of something God was about to reveal and explain. Though this sign appeared in heaven, the events described here took place on earth. The woman is further described as being in labor and travail awaiting the birth of her son. ***The obvious question is who is this woman and her male child?***

A survey of commentators on Revelation reveals numerous and varied interpretations on the identity of the woman and her child. The founder of the Christian Scientists, Mary Baker Eddy, taught that she was the woman, and her male child, was the teachings of the Christian Science religion. Roman Catholics identify the woman as the Virgin Mary, and the male child as Christ.

It seems best to understand the woman here as representing the Nation of Israel. The description of the woman as being clothed with the sun and the moon is an allusion to **Genesis 37:9-11**, where these heavenly bodies, the sun and the moon, represent Jacob and Rachel. Joseph you may recall had a dream in which he saw the sun and moon, and eleven stars bowing down before him. The sun and moon symbolized his father and mother, and the eleven stars his brothers. The 12 stars in the woman's crown is a reference to the 12 sons of Jacob and identifies the woman as Israel, who fulfills the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12 and 15).

The reference in verse 2 detailing the woman's being in travail and about to give birth to a male child is best taken to refer to the nation of Israel, who gave birth to or provided Jesus Christ. While it is true that historically Christ came into the world through the incarnation and miraculous virgin birth through Mary, the sign here refers to His coming forth from the Jewish nation. This view will be further supported in the following verses, which detail Israel's historic persecution by Satan since the Nation's inception.

### **The Second Personage: *A Great Red Dragon* (vv. 3-4)**

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

John describes the second sign or wonder as a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. The identity of the red dragon is much easier since according to Revelation 12:9 the great dragon

is the serpent of old, who is called the devil and Satan. That the red dragon is called “great” emphasizes the destructive power Satan exercises in this fallen world. “Red” describes his murderous and bloodthirsty character throughout history. “Dragon” likewise depicts his ferocious and intensely cruel nature. The dragon’s seven heads and ten horns refers to his final domination of the world through Antichrist, who will rule the world through the revived Roman Empire comprised of a ten nation federation. Three of the ten nation’s leaders will oppose Antichrist’s rise to power, and will be dealt with. That is why Satan is described as having seven heads and ten horns with crowns on them.

We read in verse 4 And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven, and threw them to the earth.

This 4<sup>th</sup> verse provides a terrific example of how prophetic Scripture can refer to multiple events in a single verse. The reference to Satan’s tail sweeping away “a third of the stars of heaven and casting them to the earth” refers to the cosmic battle that took place in the eternal ages past. That is, it is describing Satan’s fall when he revolted against God as *detailed in Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28*.

I am reading from **Isaiah 14:12-15**— “How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations! 13 “But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. 14 ‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ “Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, To the recesses of the pit.”

**Ezekiel 28:12-18**— Thus says the Lord GOD, “You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. 13 “You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz, and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx, and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald; And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, Was in you. On the day that you were created They were prepared. 14 “You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I placed you *there*. You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire. 15 “You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created, Until unrighteousness was found in you. 15 “By the abundance of your trade You were internally filled with violence, And you sinned; Therefore I have cast you as profane From the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the stones of fire. 17 “Your heart was lifted up because of

your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, That they may see you. 18 “By the multitude of your iniquities, In the unrighteousness of your trade, You profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I have brought “fire from the midst of you; It has consumed you, And I have turned you to ashes on the earth In the eyes of all who see you.”

When Satan fell he was somehow able to persuade a third of the angels of heaven to join him in his rebellion. We know from Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2:4 that a number of Satan’s fallen angels have been confined in the bottomless pit. Other fallen angels are the demons that serve Satan in his rebellion against God, both in the heavens and on this earth. Paul reminds us believers in **Ephesians 6:12** “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” Paul goes on in verses 18-19 to urge the believers in the church at Ephesus to *pray continually* in the power of the Holy Spirit, that God would strengthen him to boldly proclaim Christ.

John continues in **verse 4b**—And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.

While Satan certainly tried to put Christ to death following His birth, many believe that this verse describes Satan’s enmity against God and His work from Genesis throughout human history. **Dr. David Jeremiah explains:**

From the beginning of the Bible, Satan □ tried to keep Jesus from being born and fulfilling the promise □ God made to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15. Satan was in the Garden when God promised Eve that through her seed Satan would be crushed. He motivated Cain to kill Abel. But God brought forth Seth. Satan caused such wickedness in the world that God destroyed □ the world with a flood. But God preserved 8 persons, Noah and his family, on an ark He instructed Noah to build. Satan stirred Esau to kill Jacob who was in the line of Jesus. But □ God preserved Jacob. Satan moved Pharaoh to destroy all the male children of the Hebrews. But God saved Moses and used him to deliver His people from bondage. During the period of the kingdom, Satan sowed murder among □ the sons of David. When Jehoshaphat died, Jehoram took the throne and killed all the □ royal seed. But he had children through whom the Davidic seed was □ pre-served. Ahab and Jezebel’s wicked daughter Athaliah was the next one who tried to kill all of the royal seed. However, the □ wife of the high priest hid away baby Joash in the temple, until at the age of six he came to

power as King and slew Athaliah. In the days of Esther, Satan moved wicked Haman to induce King Ahasuerus to exterminate the Jews. But God used Mordecai and Queen Esther to save His people. □ The promised seed was preserved through the generations until □ Jesus was finally born.

Satan was waiting to devour the □ promised seed. He moved Herod to slay all of the babies in Bethlehem two years and under (Matt. 2:13-18). But an angel directed Joseph to take Mary and the baby Jesus and flee to Egypt. Satan later tempted Jesus to throw Himself down from the temple, □ and he motivated the people of Nazareth to throw Jesus off the □ brow of the hill. Satan sought Jesus' death □ through the enmity of the scribes and Pharisees when they took up □ stones to kill Jesus. But each time Jesus slipped away unharmed.

Finally, Satan moved Judas to betray Jesus to the Jewish authorities, who induced Pilate to crucify Him on a cross. But instead of ridding himself □ of the One who would eventually crush his head (Genesis 3:15), he had set in □ motion the purposes of God that would once and for all do him in □ forever. Jesus was resurrected on the third day and ascended to heaven where He is □ now making intercession for us.

When Satan saw that he couldn't destroy the body of Christ □ ascended, he turned his murderous rage against the body of Christ on earth, □ which is the Church. The Roman Empire persecuted the Christian Church ten □ different times. This period of persecution was followed by the Roman Catholic Church. Historians tell us that during the □ Inquisition of Papal Rome over fifty million Christians were slain. □ This is the wrath of the dragon against the people of the Lord. **END**

### **The Third Personage: *The Male Child, Jesus Christ* (vv. 5-6)**

5 And she gave birth to a son, a male *child*, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.

The third personage is identified as the Lord Jesus Christ. The woman, Israel, gave birth to a male child, Christ the Lord, who following His death, burial, and resurrection, was caught up, ascended up to God and to His throne in heaven. Though the earthly life and death of Christ are not mentioned in this verse, this description of His birth assumes the historic facts of the cross and the resurrection which were both necessary for Christ to defeat Satan and his rule over the earth.

**Verse 6 leaps forward**, to the Tribulation period. **6** And the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she might be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

This is a reference to the supernatural protection God will provide for the righteous remnant in Israel in the coming Tribulation period. In Matthew 24:13 Jesus speaking prophetically warned the Jews of the future that when Antichrist sets up the Abomination of Desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, in the temple, they must flee, for a persecution like the world has never seen or will ever see again will be unleashed on the world.

**The Fourth Personage: *Michael Casts Satan Out Of Heaven (vv. 7-12)***

7 And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels waged war, 8 and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.

The fourth personage introduced here is Michael, the only angel described as an archangel in the Bible. These verses describe the angelic warfare that is going to take place at the beginning of the Great Tribulation, the final 3 ½ years. Notice there is going to be a tremendous battle in heaven, with Michael and his holy angels, waging war with the dragon and his fallen angels.

This is not the first time Michael is mentioned in the Bible. We first read of him, and the cosmic warfare that goes on in heaven in Daniel 10. Daniel had been praying and fasting for 21 days, when suddenly he was touched on the arm by an angel. I take this angel to be Gabriel, who had spoken to him on other occasions. The angel informs Daniel that he was dispatched by God to bring Daniel an answer when he first began praying. However, he was delayed by Satan's chief angel over Persia. He could not break through until Michael, one of the chief angels of God came to his aide. **This is a fascinating read!**

While God, for His own sovereign purposes has allowed Satan and his evil angels to enjoy seeming victories throughout six thousand years of human history, at this juncture they will no longer be strong enough, and there will no longer be a place for them in heaven. We will look at this cosmic battle in more detail next week in our study of Revelation 13.

**We read in verse 9** And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Once again, Satan's demise will take place at the mid-point of the Tribulation period. John next hears a hymn of praise in heaven, v. 10

10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night. 11 "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death. 12 "For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time."

This great hymn of praise anticipates Christ's coming Millennial Kingdom, and the destruction of Satan, the accuser of the brethren. This song will apparently be sung by the martyrs of the Tribulation, who overcame Satan because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and the fact that they did not love their life even unto death.

***The Fifth Personage: The Offspring Of The Woman Persecuted By The Dragon Is Israel (vv. 13-17).***

13 And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child.

Following his being cast out of heaven down to the earth, Satan will increase his efforts to persecute the people of the woman, Israel. According to Zechariah 13:8-9 2/3 of the people of Israel will be killed in this Satanic purge. However, as mentioned previously, God will protect the righteous remnant of Israel, v. 14

14 And the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, in order that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time (1,260 days), from the presence of the serpent.

The two wings of the eagle do not refer to helicopters or large air transports, but merely to the rapid movement that will be necessary to escape Antichrist and his demonically possessed agents (Matt. 24). Satan will persecute the fleeing Israelites with a flood of water, v. 15

15 And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood.

While some interpret this as a literal flood, it seems best to take this as Satan's all out efforts to exterminate Israel. In any event we read in verse 16 that God intervened to help the woman. God Himself will lead a remnant of righteous Jews out into the wilderness to a place He has prepared for them. While this hiding place is not clearly identified. Some suggest that it might be Petra, the ancient fortress capital of the Nabateans in Edom, south of the Dead Sea.

According to verse 17, God's intervention on Israel's behalf will result in the dragon's becoming even more enraged.

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

When Satan is prohibited from destroying the righteous Jews who flee to the wilderness, he will focus his rage on the rest of the woman's offspring. This is a reference to the righteous Jews who failed to flee. Notice they are identified as "the rest of the woman, Israel's, offspring, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

**Conclusion:** We have seen in our study this morning that Revelation 12 introduces four important persons: The woman, Israel; the great red dragon, Satan; the male child, Christ; and the archangel Michael. It also identifies one group of people living at the end time, the righteous remnant of Israel. Next week, Lord willing, we will resume our study in chapter 13 by identifying the sixth and seventh personages of the future Tribulation period.

Closing thoughts:

1. Don't be fooled by popular opinion and psychiatrists who tell us the devil is nothing more than an antiquated religious invention. Satan is alive and well, and he hates you and your attempts to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. This lesson makes it clear that ***Satan is a loser***. He has been judged at Calvary, and while he still enjoys a measure of freedom, his ultimate end is coming quickly. Michael and his heavenly forces will cast Satan and his evil forces out of heaven at the midpoint of the Tribulation. He is a doomed foe!
3. Both Daniel and Paul teach us ***that prayer is our greatest weapon*** against Satan and his scheming demons. When confronting people or situations



where Satan's demonic agents are obviously present, prayerfully call upon the Lord Jesus Christ for help and protection.

Closing prayer:

Closing song: *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*