

## WEEK 17: CHAPTER 12

### INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 12

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- Even though the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet sounded in Revelation 11:15, it's not until chapter 16 that all the details of what is contained in the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet are revealed.
- We are still looking at the interlude between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet in chapters 12-15.
- Remember, these interludes are not moving the story forward but giving more information about what is taking place during that time.
- “A proper understanding of Revelation 12 is not only the key to a correct interpretation of the whole Book of the Revelation, but also the key to understanding the entire Bible for it presents the history and future of the nation Israel. Revelation 12 reveals the conflict of the ages. This conflict involves Israel, Christ and Satan. This chapter describes for us the great conflict of the past as well as the great conflict of the future.”<sup>1</sup>

### CHAPTER 12:1-2 ~ THE WOMAN

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**Revelation 12:1-2** “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.”

- John starts this section with *a great sign appeared in heaven*.
- This “woman” is Israel...not an actual woman.
- This sign is a symbol which points the readers to a reality...in this case, namely Israel.
- “The main point is that it is a sign or symbol of important truth rather than merely a wonder.” (Walvoord)
- “This sign in verse 1 is distinguished by being called “great.” Though the sign is seen in heaven, it apparently portrays a reality on the earth, for subsequently the woman pictured is persecuted by Satan in the great tribulation. The woman is described as clothed with the sun, having the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. Further, she is with child and waiting the imminent birth of her son.” (Walvoord)
- This description from John points us to **Genesis 37** and the description of Jacob and Rachel in Joseph’s dream.
- **Genesis 37:9-10** “Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, ‘Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.’ {10} He related it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, ‘What is this dream

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore H. Epp, *Practical Studies in Revelation, Vol. 2* (Lincoln: Back to the Bible), 163.

that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?’

- This symbol identifies the woman with the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.
- This would also mean then that the 12 stars are the 12 tribes of Jacob (Gen. 37:9)
- “The woman as the nation of Israel is seen travailing in birth and awaiting delivery of her child. Frequently in Scripture the nation Israel is pictured in the tribulation time as going through great trial and affliction. Though, historically, the nation gave birth to Christ through the Virgin Mary, the implication of verse 2 is that the references are to the sufferings of Israel as a nation rather than to the historic birth of Christ.”  
(Walvoord)
  - This is not about *actual birth pains* but about corporate and national persecution which was continually coming upon the nation of Israel.
- “Who she is must be determined from another consideration, namely her relation to the child. Since the child is clearly Christ (from the description of His ruling in v. 5...), the woman must be the one who bore Christ –Israel. That she is Israel and not only Mary is corroborated by the fact that it is this woman who is persecuted during the last half of the Tribulation (vv. 13-17).”
- This child being birthed cannot be the church because the church did not give birth to Christ but rather, as Matthew 16:18 points out, Christ built His church.
- This first “pain” which Israel was under is pointing to the next “pain” that the nation of Israel will be under during the Antichrist’s persecution right before the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus.

## **CHAPTER 12:3-4 ~ DRAGON**

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**Revelation 12:3-4** “Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. {4} And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.”

- This dragon is Satan. He is called that in **verse 9**.
- He’s not a real dragon but perhaps because John sees him as terrifying and violent that is the most monstrous description he can give.
- We have 7 heads with 7 diadems (crowns) which symbolize absolute rule and authority.
  - The 7 heads likely represent the 7 consecutive world powers which existed under Satan’s sovereign rule...Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and 1 more future empire.
  - The 10 horns most likely represent a revived Roman Empire which will occur during the Tribulation.
  - This will be a 10-nation alliance which is ruled by the Antichrist.

- Daniel predicted this:
  - **Daniel 7:7-8** “After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. {8} While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great boasts.”
  - **Daniel 7:24** “As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.”
- “...it is clear that the revived Roman Empire is in view. Satan, however, is also called the dragon later in 12:9, and it is clear that the dragon is both the empire and the representation of satanic power. The color red may indicate his murderous characteristics. 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)
- **Verse 4** gives us some interesting information about Satan and his followers.
  - This would refer to, not literal stars, but most likely to Satan’s original revolt in heaven. It was after his revolt that he took a 1/3 of the angels with him.
    - It would appear that this was the “salvation” moment for angels. This moment took place before the fall of Adam and Eve but after the 7<sup>th</sup> day when God rested.
  - We don’t know how many angels fell with Satan but we do know that it is vast. We know from Revelation 9:16 that 200 million will be released...
- Not only does John see the fall of Satan and his demonic angels, but he also then sees the birth of Christ.
  - Just reading the story of Jesus’ birth and how Herod wanted to kill Jesus, we may not understand the spiritual forces behind his decision.
    - **Matthew 2:13** “Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him.’”
  - “It is significant that Herod as an Edomite was a descendant of Esau and of the people who were the traditional enemies of Jacob and his descendants. Whether motivated by his family antipathy to the Jews or by political consideration because he did not want competition in his office as king, Herod

nevertheless fulfilled historically this reference to the destruction of children in Bethlehem.”

(Walvoord)

## CHAPTER 12:5-6 ~ THE CHILD

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- **Revelation 12:5-6** “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. {6} Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.”
- This child is Jesus Christ and those who fled are Israel when they flee from the Antichrist’s persecution during the Tribulation.
- Interesting to note, between **verses 5-6** is “2000 years.” This gap represents the church age.
- MacArthur explains that verse 5 records the historic event of the ascension, while verse 6 jumps thousands of years into the future. He notes that this gap represents the **Church Age**, a period hidden as a mystery from the Old Testament prophets.<sup>2</sup>
- Ryrie teaches that because the Church was an unrevealed secret in the Old Testament, biblical timelines often possess an unstated gap between Christ’s first coming (His birth and ascension in v. 5) and the events of the final seven years (the 1,260 days in v. 6).<sup>3</sup>
- “There is obviously a tremendous time lapse between verses 5 and 6, but this is not an uncommon occurrence in prophecy; the first and second comings of Christ are frequently spoken of in the same sentence.” (Walvoord)
- So you have Jesus being born and He is going to rule the nations...this hasn’t happened yet.
- **Psalm 2:9** “You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.”
- The “child” being caught up is a picture of the ascension of Jesus to the throne after His death and resurrection when He was on earth.
- “The fact that He is caught up not only to God but to “his throne” is another indication that Christ is intended.” (Walvoord)
- In **verse 6**, the woman (nation of Israel) will flee into the wilderness to a prepared place where God is going to protect them for 1,260 days; or 3.5 years...the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the Tribulation.
- Again, Satan fails to kill Jesus when He was born. He finally did kill Jesus at the cross, but Jesus came back and now sits at the right hand of the Father.

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<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur, *MacArthur NT Commentary*, Revelation 12:6

<sup>3</sup> Charles Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible*, Revelation 12:5-6.

- Satan is putting all his might against the nation of Israel to take her out.
- God preserves her in the midst of all of this. The exact location of where God is going to do this is unknown, but it is a place prepared in the wilderness.
- Many have speculated that Petra, Jordan, is going to be the place.



\*Pictures from [www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/world-heritage/article/petra-jordan](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/world-heritage/article/petra-jordan)

- This city has narrow access and can be defended very easily. It also has a very large canyon area where 1000's of people can easily survive.
- “Inasmuch as Israel is in comparative tranquility and safety in the first three and one-half years of Daniel’s seventieth week (Dan. 9:27), the reference must be to the preservation of a portion of the nation Israel through the great tribulation to await the second coming of Christ.” (Walvoord)
- From this persecution, 2/3 of the nation of Israel will be killed in judgment. The remaining 1/3 will be protected, saved, and brought into the Millennial Kingdom.
- **Zechariah 13:8-9** “‘It will come about in all the land,’ Declares the LORD, ‘That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; But the third will be left in it. {9} And I will bring the third part through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them; I will say, ‘They are My people,’ and they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’”

## **CHAPTER 12:7-12 ~ THE WAR IN HEAVEN**

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**Revelation 12:7-12** “And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. 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. {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. {10} Then 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, he

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 when faced with 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.”

- In **verses 7-9** there will be a war between Michael and his angels and Satan and his angels.
  - This is a literal, future battle which happens in the heavens at about the midpoint of the Tribulation.
- This is common throughout all of history in the spiritual realm. Satan’s forces are constantly coming against God’s angels.
- **Daniel 10:13** “But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.”
- **Daniel 10:20** “Then he said, ‘Do you understand why I came to you? But I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia; so I am going forth, and behold, the prince of Greece is about to come.’”
- **Jude 1:9** “But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’”
- When Satan hits the earth, it is then he realizes that his time is running out. He’s down to a literal 3.5 years and this sparks an unmatched fury which is set upon the globe.<sup>4</sup>
- “Satan’s battle plan for the earthly phase of the war of the ages is brutally simple: to eliminate all those who serve God. If he could, he would kill them all. If not that, he would destroy their faith, if that were possible. Were he able to rid the earth of all those who serve God, the devil would achieve his goal of unifying the entire world under his rule...To achieve those goals, Satan desperately wants to prevent the Lord Jesus Christ from establishing His kingdom – both now spiritually in the hearts of men and in its future millennial and eternal forms.”<sup>5</sup>
- In **verses 10-12**, there is praise that breaks out in heaven when Satan is defeated.
- “The victory of the saints in that hour is revealed in verse 11, where it is declared that they overcame Satan by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony, and by the fact that they loved not their lives unto death. The accusations of Satan are nullified by the blood of the Lamb which renders the believer pure and makes possible his spiritual victory. The word of the saints’ testimony opposes the deceiving work of Satan in that the preaching of the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The saints’ dedication to their task in which many of them die as martyrs is recognized by the statement “They loved not their lives unto the death.” (Walvoord)

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> MacArthur, *Revelation 12-22*, 15.

- Satan has been the accuser of the brethren since his beginning.
- He has been accusing believers “before our God day and night.”
- Those who overcame the accuser did not do so on their own merit but by a continual faith in Christ. There was no binding, no confronting, or no rebuking Satan in order to defeat him.
- It is only through the blood of Jesus that there is any true victory.

## **CHAPTER 12:13-18 ~ THE WAR ON EARTH**

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**Revelation 12:13-17** “And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. {14} But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. {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. {16} But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. {17} So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”

- This is the Antichrist’s failed and desperate attempt to commit genocide against the believing Jews and other Tribulation saints.
  - Frustrated by his inability to kill the hidden core of Israel, Satan turns his vengeance toward “the rest of her offspring.” These offspring are individual Tribulation saints—both Gentiles and Jews who convert to Christ *after* the Rapture and refuse to take the mark of the beast.
- This is Satan’s “last chance” to take out God’s people, namely the nation of Israel.
- This final 3.5 years is going to be the worst devastation that this world has ever seen.
- This is going to be the fulfillment of **Jeremiah 30:7** “Alas! for that day is great, there is none like it; and it is the time of Jacob's distress, but he will be saved from it.”
  - The phrase “Jacob’s distress” means that the nation of Israel is going to come under great and awful persecution.
- **Daniel 12:1** “Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.”
- “This apparently is the beginning of the great tribulation of which Christ warned Israel in Matthew 24:15-22. This had its foreshadowing in Herod’s slaughter of the infants following the birth of Christ (Matt. 2:16). It seems here to refer specifically to the great tribulation which is yet future.” (Walvoord)
- There is nothing like this persecution which is specifically aimed at God’s chosen people.

- In **verse 14**, there are going to be “two wings of the great eagle” given to Israel so that “she could fly into the wilderness to her place.”
- Again, this protection is going to happen for 3.5 years.
- This is likely a reference to **Exodus 19:4** “You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself.”
  - This is when God protected the nation.
- **Deuteronomy 32:11-12** “Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, That hovers over its young, He spread His wings and caught them, He carried them on His pinions. {12} The LORD alone guided him, And there was no foreign god with him.”
- God is going to take care of Israel for the 3.5 years just as He did in the desert when they came out of Egypt.
- In **verses 15-16** there is a second attack. This could be a literal flood or just the way John is describing the vicious attack upon Israel.
- Again, God will supernaturally protect them and preserve them until the end.
- “Whether natural or supernatural means are used, it is clear that God does preserve a godly remnant, though according to Zechariah 13:8, two-thirds of Israel in the land will perish.” (Walvoord)
- Lastly, in **verse 17**, Satan realizes that he can’t take out Israel so he turns on “the rest of her children.”
- Those are the ones who have been affirmed because they “keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”
- “While the program of Satan is against the Jewish race as such, anti-Semitism as a whole will reach its peak against Jewish *believers* during this period. There is a double antagonism against those in Israel who turn to Christ as their Messiah and Saviour in those critical days and maintain a faithful witness.” (Walvoord)
- This attack, most likely, also includes those Gentiles who turned to Christ for salvation.
- “Taken as a whole, chapter 12 is a fitting introduction to the important revelations given in chapter 13. Here are the principal actors of the great tribulation with the historic background which provides so much additional information. Israel, Satan, Christ, the archangel, and the godly remnant figure largely in the closing scenes of the age. Next the two principal human actors are introduced: the beast out of the sea and the beast out of the earth, the human instruments which Satan uses to direct his program during the great tribulation.” (Walvoord)