

VICTORIOUS LIFE CHURCH BIBLE STUDY
SERIES: THE BOOK OF REVELATION
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REVELATION 12 – – THE WOMAN, THE CHILD, AND THE DRAGON

Revelation 12:1-17

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: 2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. 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. 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. 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. 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. 7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, 8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. 10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. 11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. 12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. 13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. 14 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. 15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. 16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. 17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 12:17 describes the remnant of the seed of the woman as those who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. The offspring of the Woman, the Woman's seed, then refers to the saints. It is an overview providing a history stretching from the

time before humans existed until the time just before Christ's return as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. It opens with The Woman being 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.

Revelation 12 begins with the statement: "Now a great sign appeared in heaven" (verse 1). The word "sign" comes from the Greek word *semeion*, meaning "a sign, mark or token. An unusual occurrence transcending the common course of nature" (*Thayer's Greek Definitions*). The first great sign is a vision of a woman who gave birth to a child (verse 1). Then in verse 3 we read, "And another sign [*semeion*] appeared in heaven. 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.

We begin by focusing on the three symbols—a woman, a child and a dragon—represent things beyond the ordinary events of nature. As we are going to see, these three figures symbolize three major spiritual forces that have been at work for several thousand years.

Who is the woman in Revelation 12?

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. **A woman clothed**

with the sun: 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**).

Genesis 37:9-11

9 Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, “Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me.”¹⁰ So he told *it* to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, “What *is* this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?” ¹¹ And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter *in mind*.

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.

Throughout Revelation 12 we note that the “woman” is repeatedly protected by God (verses 6, 14-16), especially as the time approaches for the “kingdom of our God” to be established on earth (verse 10). In the New Testament, God’s Church is symbolized as a woman; and its members are likened to virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)

Matthew 25:1

“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

Revelation 14:4

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. 3 They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred *and* forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. 4 These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from *among* men, *being* firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. 5 And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Revelation 19:7

7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.”

The New Testament Church is called “the Israel of God” (Gal

Galatians 6:16

16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

It is also likened to “Jerusalem above,” which is called “the mother of us all” (Galatians 4:26, also see Hebrews 12:22-23). Members of the Church are described as “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His [God’s] own special people” (1 Peter 2:9). Women often represent religious systems in Revelation. Based on these passages, it is clear that the woman in Revelation 12 represents God’s people. Incidentally, it is also interesting to note that the imagery

of a dishonorable woman—one called “the great harlot”—is used in Revelation 17:1 to depict a false church that deceives many. · *Jezebel* is associated with a religious system promoting false teaching (Revelation 2:20)

Who is the Child in Revelation 12?

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, The male child refers to Jesus birth and reign as the Christ, the Messiah. He rules the world with a **rod of iron** speaks of his triumphant return. By stating the starting point and ending point of Jesus’ earthly work, John alluded to all that stood in between.

Psalm 2:9

You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

Revelation 19:15

15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

After a conflict with the Prince of this world, who came and tried Him, but found nothing in Him, the Son of the woman was taken up to heaven and sat on the right hand of God. Words can hardly be plainer than these.

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

The **pain** described refers to the travail of Israel at the time of Jesus’ birth (under Roman occupation and oppression). Indeed, Jesus Christ was born into this nation. The verse continues, **“And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.** He is also the One who, after His resurrection, was taken up in a cloud to heaven.

(Acts 1:9-11).

9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. **10** They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. **11** “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

Who is the dragon?

The third symbol of Revelation 12—“a great, fiery red dragon” (verse 3)—is described as having drawn “a third of the stars of heaven” and standing “before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born” (verse 4). A few verses later, this dragon is clearly identified as Satan: “**So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world**” (verse 9). As for the dragon drawing “a third of the stars of heaven,” this reference apparently represents Satan leading a third of the angels in a rebellion against God. Other passages show stars represent angels.

Revelation 1:20

20 The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels[a] of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

The Bible also explains that Satan had been involved in a rebellion against God in which he attempted to exalt his “throne above the stars of God” and “be like the Most High”

Isaiah 14:12-14

12 How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! **13** You said in your heart, “I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. **14** I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.”

Satan then began his work as “that serpent of old [the one who tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden], called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the *whole* world” (Revelation 12:9) If God has “ministers of righteousness,” Satan also has his servants—physical ministers (themselves deceived and helping deceive others) and spirit beings who pass themselves off as righteous but incite human beings to sin.

2 Corinthians 11:14-15

14 And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. 15 It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

Ephesians 6:12

12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Jude further describes the fallen angels or demons as “angels who did not keep their proper domain” and who are now “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.”

Jude 6

6 And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.

Revelation 12:3-17 is a concise history of Satan’s efforts to thwart God’s plan to bring many humans to glory as part of His eternal family. Satan’s actions included convincing a third of the angels to follow him in his attempt to make himself like God, attempting to have Christ killed as a child (Matthew 2:13-18), working to deceive the entire world and persecuting God’s people. As we go further we will see in greater detail Satan’s attempts to derail God’s plan.

The Dragon vs. the Child

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

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. His description “symbolically suggests his fierce power and murderous nature... a picture of the fullness of evil in all its hideous strength.” (Johnson) 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.

Daniel 7:7-8

7 “After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns. 8 “While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a human being and a mouth that spoke boastfully.

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.

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. God never made an evil being; but He made angels, principalities, and powers

capacitated for mighty joys and distinctions in His glorious domain, yet with free will. Some chose to remain in the truth, but revolted against the rule of Heaven, and became unchanging enemies of God and His Kingdom. **To devour her Child as soon as it was born:** This appears to be a historical reference to King Herod's effort to destroy Jesus as a young child by ordering the deaths of all male children from two years old and under who lived in and around Bethlehem (Matthew 2:13-18). But an angel had warned Joseph to flee to Egypt with his wife and Jesus to keep the Child from being destroyed (verse 13). Even though Satan's attempt to destroy Jesus when He was a child failed, the devil did not give up. Prior to the beginning of Jesus' ministry, "Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (Matthew 4:1). During this temptation, Satan tried to get Jesus to violate God's law and worship him instead of God. The devil offered Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory" (verse 8) if Jesus would worship him. But Jesus did not do so. When Jesus' ministry was fulfilled and it was time for Him to give His life as payment for humanity's sins, Satan was there once again. On this occasion, Satan was the one who "put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him" (John 13:2). Although Satan was clearly involved in the crucifixion of Jesus, this was actually part of God's plan for the redemption of mankind. As Genesis 3:15 had predicted, there would be ongoing "enmity" between the serpent (Satan) and the woman (God's people) and the "Seed" (Jesus) who would come from the woman. Furthermore, this passage indicated that Satan would have limited success in being able to "bruise" Christ's heel by influencing the man who would betray Jesus and that Jesus would "bruise" Satan's head by resisting his temptations and qualifying to replace him as the ruler of this world. So why did Satan expend so much effort in his attempts to destroy Jesus? Because if there had not been a perfect Savior to pay the penalty

for humanity's sins, God's plan would have been thwarted. Without a Savior, humans could not be forgiven of their sins nor could they live forever in God's eternal family.

The dragon vs. God's people

In addition to his efforts to destroy Jesus, Satan has a long history of persecuting God's people, especially members of God's Church, represented by the woman in the latter portions of Revelation 12. Although there was fierce persecution from the earliest days of the New Testament Church, God allowed the woman to flee "into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days" (verse 6). This verse indicates that the true Church was protected by God for 1,260 years.

Numbers 14:34

34 For forty years—one year for each of the forty days you explored the land—you will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you.

Ezekiel 4:6

6 "After you have finished this, lie down again, this time on your right side, and bear the sin of the people of Judah. I have assigned you 40 days, a day for each year.

These two scriptures show us that a day can represent a year. During this time—which may have continued through the Middle Ages—the Church was protected from its enemies, including the Roman Empire and false Christianity.

The next two verses then explain that "war broke out in heaven" between Satan and his angels and Michael and his angels. As a result of this war, John, in vision, saw that a place for Satan and his angels was not "found for them in heaven any longer" and they were "cast to the earth" (Revelation 12:7-9). This battle is different from Satan's original rebellion, which is described in

verse 4 and which occurred long before the birth of Christ. The setting for this battle, described in verses 7-9, and its significance is then announced by a loud voice in heaven (verses 10-12). This battle is an indicator that “the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have [or will soon] come” (verse 10). Prior to this event, Satan has had access to God’s presence to accuse His people (Job 1:6-7; Job 2:1-2). Now he and his angels no longer have this access and are cast down to the earth. Realizing the significance of this event, Satan the dragon now has “great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time” (Revelation 12:12) before Christ returns to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. He then directs his rage toward God’s people, the ones who are the continuation of the woman who gave birth to the male Child (verse 13). God, however, will not allow Satan to destroy His people. Jesus had promised that the “gates of Hades [the grave]” would not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). To protect His people, the woman is “given two wings of a great eagle,” meaning she is safely taken into “her place,” where she will be protected for “a time, and times and half a time [apparently 3½ years], from the presence of the serpent” (Revelation 12:14). Even though Satan will spew “water out of his mouth like a flood,” to try to get at the woman, he will not be successful (verses 15-16). In this passage, the concept of a “flood” likely represents armies (see Isaiah 59:19; Jeremiah 46:7-8). Satan then goes to “make war with the rest of her [the woman’s] offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17). From this passage we note that while some members of God’s true Church will be protected from Satan’s wrath during these end times prior to Christ’s return, others will not. Those not in the place of protection will need to prove their allegiance to God the Father and Christ in the face of Satan’s intense persecution.

The dragon vs. you

Whether you realize it or not, Satan also hates you and will do everything possible to keep you from loving and obeying your Creator. His anger is not just against Jesus and the Church. Why is he angry at you? Apparently, because he realizes that humans were created by God with the potential to be higher than he was (Hebrews 2:6-8). Because of his sick, twisted and unsound thinking, Satan has taken on the role of being an adversary against those seeking to love and obey their Father in heaven. Writing to the people of God, Peter cautioned,

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your *adversary* the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

In communicating with the brethren in Corinth, Paul described the true gospel as being “veiled” or hidden because of Satan,

“the god of this age,” who had blinded the minds of unbelievers (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

The good news is that this “veil is taken away in Christ” (2 Corinthians 3:14).

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. **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.