

The Woman, Child & Dragon

Revelation 12

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Revelation 12:1-6

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. ²Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. ³And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. ⁴His 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. ⁵She 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. ⁶Then 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.

What was this great sign in heaven?

I take it that it was a great vision God gave John and he was in heaven when he received it. It is also a sign that the promised return of the Messiah will happen because the events in the vision happened. The best signs are fulfilled prophecy.

Who does the Woman represent here?

Virgin Mary? ... This woman has been taken by Roman Catholic expositors to represent Mary, the Mother of Jesus. She is here seen in her post assumption role (taking up bodily to heaven) as the exalted Queen of Heaven.

Why isn't this woman symbolic of the Virgin Mary?

- The description & context indicates that Israel would be a much better interpretation.
- The reference to 3-1/2 years is a clear reference to the Tribulation period (second half)

Amillennial replacement theologians cannot accept that God is working through Israel again so they say that this woman represents the church...

What is the problem with that?

The woman gives birth to a male child (obviously Christ... rule all nations with a rod of iron, v5, Ps 2) ... it is Israel who gave birth to Christ, not the church ... Christ gave birth to the church

What about this vision re-enforces the idea that the woman represents Israel?

The description in the first couple of verses refers back to Joseph's dream in Geneses 37:9, in which the sun and moon and twelve stars represent the family of Jacob, the people of Israel.

What does the reference to the child bring to mind reinforcing that this is symbolic of the Messiah?

Jesus, a Jew born of Israel who would rule the nations with a rod of iron (v5)... see Psalm 2:9. And, of course...

Isaiah 9:6 - *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders, and he will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*

What does the dragon represent?

The symbolism of the dragon is explained in Revelation 12:9... the Devil and Satan

How did the Dragon try to devour the woman's Child?

This refers to the birth of Christ and the attempts of Satan, through King Herod to destroy the infant Jesus (Matt 2:16)

Why did Satan seek to destroy the Messiah?

- It is what he does, try to thwart the plans of God.
- He knew the prophecy of the Messiah...
Genesis 3:15 - *"He shall bruise your head"*

What does the description of the Dragon symbolically represent?

- Fiery red: represents his destructiveness, aka the Destroyer
- Seven heads: Represents complete evil; historically relevant to the 7 kingdoms that ruled over Israel, see Revelation 17:9-12
- Ten horns: rulers who yield their sovereignty to the Antichrist, see Revelation 17:12-13
- Seven crowns: complete authority over the nations

What are the stars the dragon threw to earth?

- These are fallen angels, demons who joined Satan in rebelling against God
- Apparently a third of the angels rebelled against God

When will the demons be thrown to earth?

- When Satan is kicked out of heaven (Rev 12:9) about the mid-point of the Tribulation.
- He currently has access to heaven and earth, see Job, also called the “accuser of the brethren” in Rev 12:10

v5 - What happened to the Child?

He went back to heaven and His throne.

v6 - What happened to the woman?

She had to flee to a place in the wilderness God prepared for her to be protected by Him

What is significant about the time frame?

- 1,260 divided by 360 = 3.5 years (the second half of the tribulation)
- The abomination of desolation happens at the mid-point of the tribulation causing Israel to flee

Satan Thrown Out of Heaven

Revelation 12:7-12

⁷ And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, ⁸ but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. ⁹ 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.

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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. ¹² 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.”

v7 - What happens in heaven?

Satan and Michael fight each other with their angelic host

Who is Michael?

An important, powerful angel, one of only three named in Scripture.

- God's angels are under the command of Michael
- He is an archangel (Jude 9)
- Jude 9: An account of a confrontation between Michael and Satan over the body of Moses ("The Lord rebuke you")

Why did Satan want the body of Moses?

- To use it as an instrument of idolatry
- Have Jews worship "the body" instead of God
- The same as the Brazen Serpent that Moses created in the wilderness (2 Kings 18:4 King Hezekiah broke it into pieces)
- Possibly prevent the "Two Witnesses"

v8-9 - What was the result of the fighting?

Satan and his angels lost and were kicked out of heaven (spiritual realm).

What do you think sets off this war in heaven?

It could be that the presence of the bride of Christ in heaven means that there was no longer any reason to have the accuser of the brethren around

- This is the destruction of Satan's sovereignty/power over "death"
- The end of "death" means the end of Satan's Kingdom
- The war between Michael & Satan is Satan's last effort to prevent God's plan and promises from becoming reality!

v10 - What do those in heaven think of Satan being cast out?

They rejoice and praise God... Satan is done accusing the brethren and this is an important milestone leading to Jesus establishing His kingdom on earth.

v11 - How was Satan overcome?

- By the work of Christ on the cross combined with the testimony and selfless lives of those God saved.
- God's plan is coming to fruition despite Satan's efforts to thwart it.

What is the significance of the followers of Christ not loving their lives to death?

They had no fear of dying... eternal security. This is something that has become very prominent during this corona virus pandemic.

v12 - Who will not be rejoicing about Satan being cast down to earth?

The inhabitants of the earth and the sea. (Israel & Gentile nations)

Why should the earth-dwellers mourn?

- Satan is confined to the earth and he knows he has just a short time to exert his agenda.
- He seeks to enslave as many people as he can and keep them from knowing Jesus as their Savior.

- Misery loves company

Woman Persecuted Revelation 12:13-17

¹³ Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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.

v13 – What is the significance of Satan having to discover that he was cast to the earth?

- He found that he could not get back to the spiritual realm... God limited him to the physical universe.
- Satan has always been limited by God... it's amazing that he thinks he can still thwart God's plans

How did Satan respond to being cast out of heaven?

He persecuted Israel. God's People – hatred for God always manifests itself in hatred for God's people

What foreshadowing have we seen of satanic persecution of Israel?

- Pogroms, the holocaust, holocaust denial, antisemitism, anti-Israel resolutions by the U.N., BDS movement (boycott, divestment & sanctions)
- Such actions are clearly irrational so there must be a spiritual blindness at work here

What clue does the initiation of the persecution of Israel provide as to when Satan is cast out of heaven?

The midpoint – at the abomination of desolation when Israel must flee to the wilderness.

v14 – How does God protect Israel?

He gives Israel the ability to fly away... it is unclear what this is but it is some supernatural provision... maybe a lateral rapture?

How does this harmonize with Jesus telling Jews that they must be ready to flee to the mountains when they see the Abomination of Desolation in the Olivet Discourse?

Miracles always require a step of faith to be realized; fleeing is that step of faith.

What is significant about the time frame given here?

It is another way of saying 3.5 years $1 + 2 + \frac{1}{2} = 3.5$ (the second half of the Tribulation)

Why is Satan referred to as the serpent here?

Since at this point, Satan's end is near, this is a reference to his first appearance.

- Principle of First Things – the first appearance of something is Scripture sheds light on all subsequent appearances
- Since Satan was an agent prompting the beginning of sin and death, his end is in conjunction with the end of sin and death.

Can you think of any examples of people having messed up theology because they ignore the Principle of First Things?

- It explains why Genesis is so foundational because it is a book of first things. If your view of Genesis is wrong, your view of the rest of Scripture will be flawed. If you reject the idea that the creation story is history considering it myth that got passed down by men through the generations, you will take liberties interpreting the rest of Scripture.
- I can tell a lot about a person's theology if they consider the Genesis creation story to be allegory; they will be very liberal ignoring sin and adopting what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called "cheap grace." Ultimately such flawed doctrine leads to heresies like universalism, the idea that all people have eternal life because of Christ's death on the cross.

v15 — How did Satan respond to God's protection of Israel?

He rallied the nations to root her out... Satan is the spirit behind the Antichrist who will rule over the nations.

v16 – What did God use to protect Israel?

He used the vastness of the earth to consume Satan's flood, made the pursuers look in all the wrong places.

- If God does not favor an action, it will fail

v17 – How does Satan respond to not being able to destroy Israel?

Becomes enraged and persecutes the Gentile followers of Christ (Israel's offspring)

This apparently means that the Gentile followers of Christ are not supernaturally protected like Israel... So why doesn't God also protect the Gentile believers?

- But He is fulfilling a promise to Israel to make them the most preeminent nation on earth...
Isaiah 2:2-3 – Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the Lord's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
- He will protect a sufficient remnant from each of the nations to repopulate the nations of the earth.
Zechariah 14:16 – And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

What is the message from Revelation Chapter 12 for us in the here and now?

- God's plan will be realized despite the best efforts of God's enemies to stop it.
- God is not done with Israel; will fulfill His promises to them... therefore, developments in Israel are the most significant signs that the return of Jesus is near!