

Chapter Twelve

The Woman, the Child, and the Dragon

Revelation now recycles backward, showing a divine perspective of events. Chapter 11 ended with Christ enthroned, the judgment initiated, and Satan defeated. Chapter 12 re-tells part of this story, showing Israel as a woman clothed with great authority and bringing Jesus into the world. Satan is ever-present, waiting to destroy Him. Christ, however, is enthroned on high, out of the Devil's "reach." Having failed to destroy God's plan of redemption, he goes after the church, which is hidden in the world during a time of distress. The persecutors can't "see" God's people (they are "hidden"). Satan tries to flood the earth with false doctrine in order to destroy her.

12:1-2 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; and she was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth.

Great sign in heaven: A magnificent *symbol* of spiritual significance. This is one of three places in Revelation where the term 'great sign' is used. The Jews relied heavily upon signs as proof that what they were being told was truly from Jehovah. They had been brought out of Egypt with signs and wonders. The OT prophets also used signs to validate their words as Jehovah's. Although Jesus worked many signs and miracles, the Jews refused to accept them as proof that what He said was from God. (John 10:25-26)

As we shall soon see, this woman is a symbol of Israel, through which Christ was born. In a biological sense, she was His *mother*. However, the body of true believers becomes His *bride*. (19:7; 21:9) It seems strange that Christ would marry His "mother," but these are spiritual concepts requiring spiritual discernment. A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. (1 Cor 2:14)

A woman clothed with the sun: A conspicuous resemblance to Christ, (Rev 10:1) which illustrates how God's people are to appear. The sun is a metaphor for illumination and understanding. (Mic 3:6) The righteous are compared to the sun's brightness. (Matt 13:43) Jesus' face is like the sun, 'face' being a Greek word for 'presence.' His awesome presence describes His discernment of men's thoughts and eliminate the darkness of untruth. (Rev 1:16) The sun's spiritual significance is enlightenment.

Clothing in scripture is symbolic of a person's condition. Shame (Job 8:22; Psa 35:26), righteousness (Job 29:14), gladness (Psa 30:11; 65:12), majesty (Psa 104:1), cursing (Psa 109:18), honor (Psa 104:1), and dishonor (Psa 109:29) are all depicted as clothing, or a person's *condition*. Christians are to be clothed with humility toward one another. (1 Pet 5:5) It is to be part of their *condition*, not something feigned. This woman is *clothed* with enlightenment. It refers to Israel's possession of God's laws and edicts, giving them moral and spiritual superiority over the other nations, who were spiritually naked and darkened in their understanding. (Eph

4:18)

Moon under her feet: The ancients considered the moon to be the measuring device for times and seasons (see notes on 6:12). The moon under Israel's feet typifies that they were not subject to, or in obeisance to seasons. Israel was to be exalted *above* them. She was not controlled by time, but time is subdued beneath her. When the fullness of time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law. (Gal 4:4)

God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also. And God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth (*He placed the church in the spiritual realm to guide the world in truth*), and to govern the day and the night (*they will reign with Christ always*), and to separate the light from the darkness. (Gen 1:16-18)

The Mosaic Law was a shadow of better things to come. The moon, being the lesser light, derives its light as a reflection of the sun, just as the wife reflects her husband's authority. During the Jewish dispensation, the lesser light (the Law) ruled the dark world, reflecting the coming glories of the Gospel. At the rising of the sun (Matt 17:2; Rev 1:16), night ended, rendering the moon's light unnecessary.

On her head a crown of 12 stars: At her point of authority (head) are 12 *leaders*. These are obvious symbols pointing back to Joseph's dream:

Now (Joseph) 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." And he related it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have had? Shall *I and your mother and your brothers* actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?" (Gen 37:9-10)

Jacob understood the sun to be himself, as the senior leader, who guided the family. The moon—his wife—was the lesser authority that provided guidance during his absence. His brothers were the 11 stars who later made up Israel's ancestral origin as a nation.

The number '12' is a symbol for national identity. These 12 stars represent the 12 tribes of Israel. The Jews used this number persistently throughout history. There were Moses' 12 pillars (Exo 24:4); the 12 jewels in the high priest's breastplate (Exo 28:21); the 12 cakes of showbread (Lev 24:5); the 12 rods (Num 17:2); the 12 spies (Num 13); the 12 stones placed by Joshua in the Jordan river bed (Josh 4:9); Solomon's 12 officers (1 Kgs 4:7); the 12 stones of Elijah's altar (1 Kgs 18:31); and the 12 apostles of Jesus. All of these imply the national origins of Israel as a nation, leadership being the foundation. In Revelation, the number is seen in the sealing of the 12 tribes (7:5ff), and in the description of the Heavenly Jerusalem found in the last two chapters. It is the number that best represents national identity.

She was with child: Here, the woman's identity is revealed as the nation of Israel. The 12 tribes form the head (authority) of her nation, and it was through her seed (lineage) that the Christ was born. Normally, the seed is associated with males in scripture, but the promise in Genesis 3:15 identifies the seed with the woman. Through her the Christ (seed) would spring forth.

She cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth: This may reflect what Paul told the Galatians: “When the fullness of the time came (IE, *at the right season*), God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.” (Gal 4:4) The pain of childbirth is used in describing Israel’s anguish:

They will be terrified, pains and anguish will take hold of them; they will writhe like a woman in labor, they will look at one another in astonishment, their faces aflame. Behold, the day of the Lord is coming... (Isa 13:8-9)

The birth of Christ meant salvation, which could not be attained through the Law:

As the pregnant woman approaches the time to give birth, she writhes and cries out in her labor pains, thus were we (*nation of Israel*) before Thee, O Lord. We were pregnant, we writhed in labor, we gave birth, as it were, only to wind. We could not accomplish deliverance for the earth nor were inhabitants of the world born (*The Law could not save anyone*). Your dead will live; their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, for your dew is as the dew of the dawn, and the earth will give birth to the departed spirits. (Isa 26:17-19)

Jesus chastised the Jewish leaders, saying, “You search the scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life.” (John 5:39) They actually prevented people from getting into heaven by their many layers of rules and regulations. (Luke 11:46) They thought that acceptability before God was achieved by keeping the law’s requirements.¹ Isaiah’s description of the Jews’ looking at one another in astonishment, their faces aflame (Isa 13:8), etc, is a reaction to “the Day of the Lord,” which was the Messiah’s coming. He would demonstrate what God desired from them.

I have kept silent for a long time, I have kept still and restrained myself. Now like a woman in labor I will groan (*the fullness of the time came*), I will both gasp and pant. I will lay waste the mountains and hills (*those who exalt themselves and make the path difficult*), and wither all their vegetation (*destroy their endeavors*); I will make the rivers into coastlands, and dry up the ponds. And I will lead the blind by a way they do not know, in paths they do not know I will guide them. I will make darkness into light before them and rugged places into plains (*bring down those who have exalted themselves*). These are the things I will do, and I will not leave them undone. (Isa 42:14-16)

12:3 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.

Another sign in heaven: Not a *great* sign, so as not to put undue importance on the Adversary.

Great red dragon: Literally, *monster*. Satan is a huge and powerful enemy of the righteous. By John’s time, dragons had become creatures of myth, implying that all of Satan’s power and authority is, for the most part, fabrication and invention. Many want to see this panorama as something that happened in heaven. It has been used to support the notion of Satan’s fall from heaven after a great

¹ Radio evangelist, Dr. J. Vernon McGee, related a story about a man who had been keeping a diary listing all the good things he had done. His plan was to present it to God when it came his turn to stand before the Throne. When Dr. McGee pointed out the man’s futility and need for Christ, the man replied, “I don’t need no Jesus; I can get to heaven on my own good deeds.”

rebellion that took place eons ago. However, the term *dragon* (or *leviathan*) is used throughout scripture to mean any evil ruler or entity, such as Pharaoh (Psa 74:13, 14; Isa 51:9; Ezek 29:3; 32:2), or Babylon. (Jer 51:34, 44)

In that day the Lord will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, with His fierce and great and mighty sword, even Leviathan the twisted serpent; and He will kill the dragon who lives in the sea (IE, who resides in the nations). (Isa 27:1)

This word is also translated *jackal* (Lam 4:3), *serpent* (Psa 91:13), and *crocodile*. (Ezek 29:3) They are all cunning, opportunistic killers. Satan is a *great red* dragon, signifying his great sin. The color red is associated 26 times with the Red Sea, and is an OT symbol representing that great entity blocking the way of God's people and preventing their escape from destruction (the Egyptian army). Just as the Red Sea prevented God's people from deliverance, so also does sin and Satan block our way. Only God can part the Red Sea of sin; only Christ can destroy the work of the devil. (1 John 3:8)

Seven heads: In other words, Satan's authority was *complete*. He obtained this authority when Adam and Eve willingly obeyed him. As a result, Satan held reign over the human race; he held legitimate authorization over Death and Hell.² I don't see these heads as human kings assembled together in a particular place at a particular moment. Satan certainly used humans to carry out his will. He also used earthly messengers to deceive. (2 Cor 11:14-15) In Revelation, the Jews and Romans are his minions.

Ten horns: 10 kings. There is no reason to assume that the number '10' is symbolic. In Daniel's vision, 10 horns become 10 kings. Thus, while the symbol changes, the number does not. (Dan 7:24) The number signifies *completeness* or *sufficiency*:

- The 10 Commandments summarized the *sufficiency* of God's requirements for obedience. (Exo 34:28)
- The tabernacle's court had 10 curtains, 10 pillars, and 10 sockets. (Exo 26:1; 27:12; 38:12), enabling a *sufficient* (or complete) separation from man's eyes.
- The Israelites tested God 10 times, indicating a *sufficient* number of times that should have effected their repentance. (Num 14:22)
- God gave Jeroboam 10 tribes, *sufficiently* removing the kingdom from Solomon's hand. (1 Kings 11:31)
- Israel argued with Judah, asserting that they had "10 parts of the king" (IE, 10 tribes as opposed to Judah having only Simeon). (2 Sam 19:43-44)

The number is also used as a euphemism for superiority. Wisdom strengthens a wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city. (Eccl 7:19) Elkanah asked his wife, "Am I not better than 10 sons?" (1 Sam 1:8)

² Satan ruled the world (John 12:31) at one time. However, "death reigned from Adam until Moses." (Rom 5:14) The Devil also claimed power to give his kingdom to whomever he wished, saying, "it has been handed over to me." (Luke 4:6) Thus, through Adam's disobedience, Satan inherited *legal jurisdiction* over the human race.

This dragon is a reflection of the beast that appears in chapter 13:

I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having *10 horns and 7 heads*, and on his horns were 10 diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names. (Rev 13:1)

There is speculation among scholars whether these numbers are symbolic or literal. Kurt Simmons summarizes the issue:

The numbers seven and ten are symbolic of that which is full or complete. Some writers spiritualize the seven heads and ten horns, interpreting them in terms of the Dragon's plenary power and consummate evil. However, this interpretation leaves much to be desired. In Daniel's series of visions concerning the world powers from the captivity to the coming of Christ, the number of heads, wings, horns, *etc.*, all correspond to various attributes of the nations described. For example, with the death of Alexander the Great his empire was divided by his four generals Selucia (Syria), Ptolemy (Egypt), Lysirnicus (Greece), and Cassander (Asia Minor). These were represented by the four heads of the leopard-like beast of Daniel 7:6, and the four horns of the goat depicted in Daniel 8:8, 22. To spiritualize the heads and horns of Daniel robs the visions of all meaning and intelligibility. Likewise, to spiritualize the heads and horns of the beast depicted here, upon the mere basis that the numbers seven and ten often have symbolic value, robs them of their true significance. The seven heads are identified in Rev. 17:10 with the *imperial Caesars*. The ten horns are identified as the *presidents and provincial governors* of Imperial Rome. (Rev. 17:12) The ten provinces of Rome were Italy, Achaia, Asia, Syria, Egypt, Africa, Spain, Gaul, Britain, and Germany. Here the *heads* are crowned, but in Rev. 13:1, the *horns* are wearing crowns; the difference apparently is intended to reflect the dual aspect of Roman rule embodied in its emperors and provincial presidents.³

The Great Harlot's (Jerusalem's) throne is established on the dragon:

I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having *7 heads and 10 horns*. (Rev 17:3)

The meaning of the heads and horns of the dragon are explained in chapter 17:

The ten horns which you saw *are ten kings*, who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings *with* the beast for one hour. These have one purpose and they give their power and authority to the beast. (Rev 17:12-13)

What is their "one purpose"? To destroy Jerusalem:

The ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. (Rev 17:16)

Thus, Herod, Rome, and the Jewish rulers can be rightly understood as a *dragon*—a great and evil power (Satan) working through human agencies to destroy the church. The dragon in heaven doesn't necessarily refer to his abode, but means the Romans and Jewish leaders ruled over God's house.

From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force. (Matt 11:12)

³ *The Consummation of the Ages*, p. 237

Even though Rome was an earthly and civil power, its authority came from heaven. (cf. Rom 13:1ff) Men were trying to rule—taking power by force. Rome’s power was spiritual in nature and essence by its identification with sin and opposition to the gospel and Christ’s kingdom. In this sense, the Dragon carries a dual symbolism as the embodiment of sin and death and in opposition to Christ.

12:4 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.

Tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven: The tail is indicative of false prophets (see notes on 9:10). *Carried away* applies to a person being swept away by the error of unprincipled men (2 Pet 3:17), by personal lust (James 1:14), by varied and strange teachings (Heb 13:9), and by another person’s hypocrisy. (Gal 2:13) Men are swept away like the flood, falling asleep (dying). (Psa 90:5)

The stars are spiritual leaders (see notes on 1:16) being deceived by lies. *One-third* means that many spiritual leaders were deceived and brought into fleshly bondage (see notes on 8:7). They had rejected the spiritual intent of God’s righteousness, supplanting it with their own self-righteousness and external ritualism. This deception helped facilitate Satan’s mission of killing the Christ-child. With the Jewish religious leaders blinded to their own self-righteousness, they were ill-prepared to recognize Jesus’ call to a spiritual and inward righteousness of the heart. Instead of receiving Him with open arms, they were prepared to exterminate him. This was Satan standing before Israel, seeking to destroy the Child.

Out of one of them came forth, a rather small horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful Land. It grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down. (Dan 8:9, 10)

Daniel was referring to the invasion of Judea (the Beautiful Land) by Antiochus Epiphanes. The stars symbolize the saints and people of God, which should be the meaning extrapolated from Revelation. Their *casting down* points to the persecution and death of church leaders and apostles. This goes on today, where churches are replacing biblical truth for political correctness.

Stood before the woman: Satan literally *camped out* in front of Israel. Those who traveled were *campers*, or in most versions a *company* (KJV, RSV, NAS), or *group* (NIV). (Gen 32:8) Soldiers established camps near cities they sought to conquer. (Ezek 4:2) Note how Satan is depicted in two parables as a traveler:

Now a traveler came to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take from his own flock or his own herd, to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him; rather he took the poor man’s ewe lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him. (2 Sam 12:4)

While men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. (Matt 13:25)

In David’s case, Nathan describes the traveler as a mysterious third party concerning the king’s

adultery with Bathsheba and her husband’s murder. Due to his spontaneous lusts—depicted as a traveler passing through—David committed these sins. The traveler (Satan) became an invited *guest*, where he *camped out*, soon taking over as *owner* of the house and David becoming the *slave* to his lusts. In the parable of the wheat and the tares, Satan came, did his dirty work, and went on his way.

Throughout Israel’s history, Satan stood in the way they were supposed to go. He “camped out” (through false prophets—his tail sweeping), causing the Jews to embrace idolatry, adopt false doctrines, and boast of their earthly righteousness (*cast them to the earth*). At Jesus’ birth, Satan used Herod as a vehicle to try and kill Him. (Matt 2:3-13)

Satan knew that he was under a dark cloud, remembering the words spoken by God in the Garden of Eden: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel.” (Gen 3:15)

Exodus	Revelation
Israel bears a deliverer (Moses)	The woman bears a child (Jesus)
Pharaoh tries to kill him	The Dragon tries to destroy Him
Israel suffers persecution	The woman suffers persecution
Israel escapes into the desert	She flees into the wilderness
Israel enters the Promised Land	New Heavens and Earth
Fed by God with manna	Protected by God with His Word

The picture is describing these things on a *spiritual* plane. The difficulty lies in matching the events with what took place on earth. The dragon was a personification of Rome, Herod, *et al*. They tried to kill Christ by slaughtering every male child two years old and under. (Matt 2) Throughout Jesus’ life, they plotted time and again to kill Jesus. They failed. When the apostles began spreading the Good News, the Jewish authorities stirred up Rome to try and annihilate the church. With each martyr and apostle’s death, the Jews believed they were winning. Little did they realize that Satan was pulling their puppet strings, making them dance to his music.

12:5 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.

Christ is now born, but caught up to God and His throne. He is born, killed, and resurrected in the space of one sentence. This is a heavenly summary of events. *Caught up* signifies that Jesus was under God’s protection and authority, out of Satan’s reach. It was the Holy Spirit who ascended on Jesus at baptism. Immediately after His baptism, He was tempted by the devil but overcame by resting on the authority (God’s throne) of scripture. The dragon (represented by the Jewish authorities) now turn on the woman, since they had failed to kill the Messiah.

Rod of iron: Christ’s rule is unbreakable; no other authority can challenge it. It specifically refers to His power over the unrighteous and disobedient nations (see notes on 2:27). This is why, when the two witnesses were brought back to life, the nations were enraged (see notes on 11:18). They were no longer in control. They had “fallen” from heaven.

12:6 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.

Note the similarity between these verses and what the prophet Micah wrote:

Writhe and labor to give birth, daughter of Zion, like a woman in childbirth, for now you will go out of the city, dwell in the field (*the wilderness*), and go to Babylon. There you will be rescued; there the Lord will redeem you from the hand of your enemies. (Micah 4:10)

Fled into the wilderness: A person flees to escape and hide from a predator. The woman fled into the wilderness to be *nourished* by God and to *escape* the dragon. (12:3-6) Islands fled at Babylon's destruction. (16:20) Heaven and earth fled from the presence of God, with nowhere to hide. (20:11) The wilderness is an OT type and shadow for the world, a place of desolation. (Isa 50:2; 64:10; Jer 4:26-27) It is uninhabited. (Jer 22:6) Chaldea (Babylon) became "the least of nations, a wilderness, a parched land, a desert." (Jer 50:12) "I will...make her (Israel) like a wilderness, make her like desert land, and slay her with thirst." (Hosea 2:3) The metaphor is speaking of the church in the world, hiding from Satan and being cared for by God. In the immediate context, the wilderness referred to the gospel being spread out over the land pursuant to the widespread persecution of the church. (Acts 9: 36, 38; 10:1) This was predicted by Amos (Amos 9: 11, 12). Since the Gentiles were to be brought in, and the kingdom of God was to fill the whole earth (Dan 2:35), the term *wilderness* included the *wilderness of the nations*.

Place prepared by God: Verse 14 says that the woman was taken to the wilderness to be nourished by God. The word *prepared* means *made ready* or *appointed*. From God's perspective, things are prepared for use in His sovereign purposes. Jonah's "great fish" was *appointed* (NAS) or *prepared* (KJV) by God to teach the wayward prophet a lesson. (Jonah 1:17) The world is where Christians sojourn, learning how to bear spiritual fruit and make ourselves into the likeness of Christ. (Rom 8:28; cf. Eph 4:11-24)

1,260 days: A time of distress or chaos. (See notes on 11:2) The symbols 3½ years, 42 months, or 1,260 days are various ways of describing *a time of distress and suffering*. The woman (the church) is in the wilderness—a place of desolation—yet comforted by God in her distress. How is God protecting and caring for the church in the world? Speaking of His apostles, Jesus prayed, "I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world. (John 17:11) For all intents and purposes, Jesus was scheduled to depart the earth, leaving His followers behind:

I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one (The Dragon is looking for them). They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. (John 17:15-19)

To put it bluntly, some Christians desire a glorious "rapture" so they can give all of their troubles the middle finger. Jesus' prayer—and God's will for us—is to provide a testimony to the world in the midst of persecution. He will protect His church from evil, but, "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (2 Tim 3:12) This is how God protects His church in the wilderness (the world)—*through His Eternal Word*. Many rely on amulets, crucifixes, pictures, statues, beads—the list is infinite—things seen and touched. Yet God has given us His sure word of promise, which no plastic statue, string of beads, or portrait can provide.

12:7-8 And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.

War in heaven: What would constitute this battle? Good against evil, where evil is now defeated. If we understand verse 5 to mean Christ ascended to His heavenly throne, then this would indeed start a war. Satan had the keys to Death and Hell, thanks to Adam and Eve. Satan came with his luggage and sin entered the world. Death came through sin. (Rom 5:12) The wages of sin became death. (Rom 6:23) Since Jesus never sinned, Satan and his minions had violated that law of sin and death (Rom 8:2), losing his legitimate authority (keys) over death and the grave.

Paul describes a war taking place within a person, “a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.” (Rom 7:23) Christians war against doctrines opposed to God’s plan and will, where captives of those false doctrines are brought into obedience. (2 Cor 10:3-6)

Heaven may be understood several ways. First, it is the larger spiritual reality that lays concealed beneath the forms of this material realm; the place of spiritual dominion over earth’s peoples extant in the power of sin and death that Christ came to destroy. (Heb. 2:14; 1 Jno. 3:8) Christ was in heaven even while on earth (John 3:13); during his earthly ministry he battled the principality and powers in heavenly places, overcoming them in his cross. (Col. 2:14, 15) Second, heaven is symbolic of the dominion over the Israel of God, the place of world civil and ecclesiastical authority. Paul refers to the like contest in his letter to the Ephesians when he says that the church wrestles with “the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” (Eph. 6:12) The rulers of the darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness in high places are the world leaders of government and religion opposing the church; IE, the Romans and Jews.⁴

They were not strong enough: They lacked sufficient *authority* to remain in their lofty, heavenly positions. Prior to this, Satan had free access to God’s throne, coming and going as he pleased. (Job 1:1-12; 2:1-7; Zech 3:1-2) Once Christ won the victory over sin, there was *no longer a place found* for Satan *in heaven*.

This term, ‘strong,’ is found in several places in the book. There are three strong angels. (5:2; 10:1; 18:21) When the Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out demons through the power of the devil, He replied, “How can anyone enter the strong man’s house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.” (Matt 12:29) In application, in order for Michael and his angels to defeat Satan, the latter had to first be tied up and rendered powerless. Luke paints it with a finer brush:

When a strong man (Satan), fully armed, guards his own homestead, his possessions are undisturbed; but when *someone stronger than he* (Christ) attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied, and distributes his plunder. (Luke 11:21-22)

Satan relied on the power of the law to destroy the human race. Sin, which is personified in Satan, used the law to kill mankind. He turned God’s command—*do not eat*—against Adam and Eve. He used the law to kill. This is why the scriptures claim that the power of sin is the law. (1 Cor 15:56) Jesus’

⁴ *The Consummation of the Ages*, p. 244

blood eliminated this power of sin (the Law) through God's grace. Thus, Satan was no longer "strong enough."

Paul said, "the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good." (Rom 7:12) Although joyfully agreeing with the law of God in his inner being, Paul saw a different law in his body, waging war against the law of his mind, and making him a prisoner of the law of sin that was within him. (Rom 7:22-23) In physical terms, the Jews thought that the Law could save them, not realizing that it could only condemn. There is no grace in law, only punishment. Once the power of the law was broken through the cross and the penalty it demanded paid in full, the Jews, who relied on the law for righteousness, lost their heavenly position. They were cast down.

12:9 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.

Satan was cast down from his lofty position, along with his demon accomplices. He is removed to the earth, where he continues to wreak havoc. Note Jesus' words:

"You, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades! The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me." And the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." And He said to them, "*I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning*. Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you." (Luke 10:15-19)

Capernaum was one of several cities where Jesus worked many miracles and did much preaching. His miracles were works of mercy. As such, the city enjoyed greater advantages than Sodom and Gomorrah, hence the term, "exalted" to heaven. They were brought "closer to heaven" by Jesus' miracles and preaching. But because they sniffed at His miracles and teachings, they would no longer be exalted, but would be destroyed. As the gospel message spread, Satan lost his sway over the human race. It was the Savior's death that brought about Satan's downfall and the judgment of the Jews, as seen in His words:

"The hour *has come* for the Son of Man to be glorified...Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour...*Now* judgment is upon this world; *now* the ruler of this world shall be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." (John 12:23-32)

He did not say, "Judgment will come in several thousand years." He said, "*Now* judgment is upon this world; He did not say that Satan would be defeated at the end of time. "*Now* Satan shall be cast out." The next verse agrees perfectly: *Now* salvation...has come.⁵

12:10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the

⁵ If preachers would relate the truth of the Gospel and the victory of the Cross, more Christians wouldn't be moping about, thinking the Devil was trying to drag them to Hell. I suspect many think its easier to blame an unseen evil force for their troubles instead of looking into their own hearts as the source of their sins. (James 1:14)

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.

“If a man observes the precepts, and is a son of the law, and lives a holy life, then Satan stands and accuses him.” (*Shemoth Rabba*, Sect 31, fol. 129, 2) Even the Jewish rabbis realized the futility of trying to be righteous through the law.

To see this as a future event denies the *present* authority of Christ. Peter spoke of Christians who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the *last time*. (1 Pet 1:5) This revealing was yet to come because the Jewish seat of power and glory—Jerusalem, and to a lesser degree, the Mosaic dispensation—was still extant.

The salvation: Which is Christ. “All flesh shall see the salvation of God.” (Luke 3:6)

The power: Which is Christ. “...Christ, the power of God...” (1 Cor 1:24)

The kingdom: The place into which the redeemed are placed—the church. (Col 1:13)

The authority of His Christ: His reign over the kingdom.

At the point of Satan’s defeat, Christ can now begin to fully rule. He could not assume total command until the devil was first “dethroned.” Since the blood of the Lamb cleanses believers—as opposed to following rules and regulations—Satan no longer has the law’s leverage to accuse anyone. He, like the angels, failed to understand God’s blueprint. (1 Pet 1:12) God’s plan of being born and living a life in the flesh of a man was necessary. If He had not done so, our cry would be, “Lord, You haven’t walked in *my* shoes! You don’t know what it’s like!” Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Phil 2:8) Now, we have no excuse, since God *did* walk in our shoes. He didn’t do it for His own sake but for ours. We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been *tempted in all things as we are*, yet without sin. (Heb 4:15)

The accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night: Thanks to many well-meaning preachers, Christians believe that each time they sin, Satan accuses them before God’s throne. In the sermon, the preacher paints an expressive picture of how Christ then comes forward to act as the person’s attorney, thus mitigating the charges against them. Although this makes for good Sunday morning fodder, it contradicts the bible’s plain teaching that Satan lost all authority at the Christ’s resurrection.

12:11 “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.

Satan and his angels were defeated because “they were not strong enough.” This implies that Michael’s army was stronger, but not in any physical sense. Similarly, the saints win the battle over Satan, not because of any innate strength, but because of Christ’s atoning sacrifice. *This* is what Satan could not overcome. Not only did Jesus meet the Law’s standards perfectly, He paid the Law’s penalty. And because it is our trust in what God did at Calvary that imputes Christ’s righteousness to our record, there is absolutely nothing Satan can do to prevail. This is why Jesus told Peter, “upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” (Matt 16:18) The “rock” was not Peter,

but Peter's confession of faith. It is our faith in Christ that provides the solid foundation. Nothing can overpower it.⁶

Overcame because of the blood: God did not send His Son into the world so that we would obey rituals and regulations. Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, that person has become guilty of breaking the entire law. (James 2:10) They overcame through accepting the redemptive work of Christ, not seeking a righteousness of their own by keeping the law. This is the theme of Romans and Galatians.

Word of their testimony: Many Christians never reveal their faith to the world. John said that every spirit who *does not confess* Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist. (1 John 4:3) In other words, Christ is deleted from the conversation; He isn't mentioned. There are "Christian" radio broadcasts that hardly mention Christ. Inspirational books found in bible bookstores offer plenty of psychobabble, but very little Christ. At public ceremonies and events, Christ-less prayers are offered up to God so as not to offend those of different religious persuasions. Christians will even point to their own salvation, as if they deserved some merit, forgetting it was Christ's sacrifice that saved them.

Did not love their life: Ample scripture supports the idea that being a Christian involves much more than "going to church."

If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. (Luke 9:23-24)

Taking up the cross *daily* implies putting down one's life. Unfortunately, many believe that devoting a couple of hours a week by "going to church" makes God smile. In reality, they don't *lose* their life, they fondly hang on to it and toss God a few crumbs. They love their life to the end.

12:12 "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."

Good News and Bad News. It's good news to those who dwell in heaven, because the troublemaker is finally evicted. It's bad news, however, to those who dwell on earth (land of Judea) and the sea (the nations) because the devil's time has been suddenly cut short.

Those who dwell in heaven: These are defined as God's tabernacle:

(The Beast) opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and *His tabernacle*, that is, those who dwell in heaven. (Rev 13:6)

This tabernacle is God's dwelling (Exo 40:34; Psa 76:2), which, when on earth, was among mankind. (Lev 15:31) It is called the *secret place*. (Psa 27:5) The rebuilding of the tabernacle was a prophecy to usher in salvation for the Gentiles. (Acts 15:16-17) Christ entered into the tabernacle not

⁶ Catholics have it backwards. *Petros* (Peter) and *petra* (little stone) are two different words. It is not *Petros* of whom Christ refers, but the "little stone." It is the insignificant stone of faith, the thing the world deems "foolishness." (1 Cor 1:23)

made with human hands, and is not part of this present heavens and earth. (Heb 9:11) This tabernacle signifies His presence and heaven itself. (Heb 9:24) At one time, those on earth were not part of this tabernacle, since it was *outside the camp*.

We have an altar, from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Hence, *let us go out to Him outside the camp*, bearing His reproach. For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come. (Heb 13:10-14)

The Word became flesh and dwelt among *us*. (John 1:14) The Word lived *with* the apostles, not like the early prophets who simply received the Word *in spirit*. Since the tabernacle was now among men, God could now demonstrate the *public* propitiation of his blood. (Rom 3:25) Christ defeated Satan by His blood, and provided a conduit where God could now dwell (tabernacle) among His people. Today, God's tabernacle is the church, the temple of the Holy Spirit.

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” says the Lord. “I will put My laws into their minds, and I will write them upon their hearts. And *I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*” (Heb 8:10)

Those who dwell on the earth and sea: These are opposite those who “dwell in heaven.” They are those who have made this earth their dwelling place, unlike the Christian, for whom God has provided something better. (Heb 12:40) They carefully invest their time and energy into this life, not in the hereafter. Those who “dwell on the earth” are not every man, woman and child who lives on the planet, but is defined as those deceived by the beast. (13:14) Those who “dwell on the earth” also make the image of the beast with the fatal wound. See notes on 6:10 for a detailed explanation.

Great wrath: The term is used by Daniel in concerning Antiochus Epiphanes (Dan 11:36ff), who had “great wrath to destroy and annihilate many.” (vs. 44) It usually refers to God's wrath. (2 Kgs 3:27; 23:26; Zech 7:12; 8:2)

Short time: A limited opportunity or season, according to Strong's. Thayer defines the phrase as *a fixed and definite time, the time when things are brought to crisis; the decisive epoch waited for*. After the thousand-year reign, Satan is released for *a short time*. (20:3) In Revelation 1:1, we see a similar term: *things which must shortly take place*. The ‘things’ referred to is the revelation of Jesus Christ, and is described in the “events” written therein. The word ‘shortly’ means *speedily, a brief space of time*. It seems that men find it necessary to determine times and seasons. (Acts 1:7) However, we must be satisfied with understanding that after Satan was cast from heaven, he only had a fixed and definite period of time left on the earth.

12:13 And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child.

The dragon *saw*, meaning he *understood*. Although Satan roamed the earth in times past (Job 1), he is now exiled there permanently, meaning that he lost his place of prestige. His privilege of coming before God's throne “among the sons of God” (Job 1:6) was taken away. Now, he understands—he

sees—that he has lost this privilege, being cast to the earth and permanently away from God’s presence. The realization of his eternal fate hits home, and with that understanding comes revenge, a hatred borne of enormous pride and fear of what awaits him.

Persecuted the woman: Since the Christ-child eluded Satan, he turns his attention away from the Savior to the believers. The Jews who brought forth Christ are now under the gun. Not the Jews of fleshly descent, but the children of Abraham, who through faith, followed God. Their identity is symbolized in the woman.

12:14 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, from the presence of the serpent.

Two wings of the great eagle: Specific mention is made of *two wings*. The woman (the righteous) is given these two wings to escape into the world (wilderness). A mother eagle carries her eaglet on her back until it masters the art of flying. Moses used this picture from nature to describe God’s care for His people. God stirred up Jacob (the nation of Israel), and carried His people on His wings (Deut 32:11-12) as He delivered them from slavery in Egypt.

To be nourished by God: The wilderness is a type for the world. Although God drove the Israelites into a 40-year desert sojourn, He still took care of them, providing food, water and a moral code by which to live. Today, God provides for the church while in the world. Christians experience life in the world (our wilderness sojourn) as spiritual preparation for entering heaven. In this too, God takes care of believers through the spiritual milk of the Word (1 Peter 2:2), His grace, and the law of love.

Time, times, and half a time: Already seen as a time of great chaos. See notes on 11:2.

And to escape the serpent: The two wings (God’s deliverance) helps deliver believers from the power of the devil. They escape Satan and are now under God’s umbrella of protection. Here, the dragon returns to his serpent motif. In heaven, he was a *great dragon*; on earth, he is back to being a sly and deceitful snake, who must rely on subterfuge to accomplish his task, as he did in the Garden of Eden. A dragon destroys by his unchallenged strength. A snake has to hide and strike from a position of concealment.

12:15 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.

Having escaped into the world, the serpent cannot so easily find God’s people. He thus resorts to a “shotgun” blast method, symbolized by a flood. He burns down the building in order to kill the mice living within.

Water like a river out of his mouth: The mouth emits words. This is a torrent of false doctrine to destroy the believers (see notes on 9:14). He can’t “see” God’s people but he knows they’re out in the world. By setting the entire forest on fire, he knows he’ll get them.

A flood uses the same method. Men are swept away like the flood, falling asleep (dying). (Psa 90:5) The flood of Noah is mentioned more times in the bible than any other water-borne disaster. Floods are always pictures of disaster and destruction coming upon men’s works (Luke 6:48) and lives. (Luke

17:27) Since this flood is a river coming from the dragon's mouth, it signifies words—many words—a torrent of false doctrine designed to sweep people into spiritual darkness.

12:16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth.

The earth helped the woman: No doubt this was passive assistance rendered as a result of ignorance. The land of Judea (the earth) received the torrent of false doctrine poured out by Satan. The verb 'drunk' is *pino*, meaning *to receive into the soul*. 'Drank' is similar (*katapino*), but is used of the earth swallowing up the flood caused by the dragon. Israel *received* the spiritual water from the Rock of Christ. (1 Cor 10:4) Drinking also meant the way in which a nation carried out its affairs. (Oba 1:15-16) Jesus defined His mission on earth as a cup from which had to drink. (Matt 20:22; 26:42) Thus, the Jews *accepted* Satan's lies, having received them into their hearts. (John 8:44) They drank willingly and deeply. This acceptance of falsehood was two-fold: Not only did the Jews acknowledge and respect false teachers (Luke 6:26), they also drank the wine of idolatry. (Rev 14:8)

12:17 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.

Satan's flood of false doctrine did not affect those who stood in the truth. They were not swept away by it, because they "keep the commandments and hold to the testimony." The woman represents the Jewish believers who initially followed Christ. The transition begins with a heavenly woman, clothed with heavenly bodies, who provides a fleshly lineage for the Messiah. *She gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron.* (12:5) This is *spiritual* Israel. However, the woman is now on the earth, with Satan in hot pursuit. She moves from the heavenly to the earthly. In the world, God provides deliverance for His people, moving them into a "wilderness." Satan's plan in destroying Israel through flooding the earth with false doctrine fails. The believers hold true to the faith.

Yet another transition takes place: there are *offspring of the woman*, on whom Satan now focuses his attention. The woman is the nation of Israel who bore Christ into the world. Paul said, "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." (Gal 3:29) The offspring then are not of the flesh, but the spirit:

They are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; neither are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants...it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. (Rom 9:6-8)

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. (Gal 3:26-29)

The earth swallowing the flood from Satan's mouth represents the unbelieving Jews, and can be seen in the scripture here:

That which Israel is seeking for, *it has not obtained*, but those who were chosen obtained it, and

the rest (of Israel) were hardened; just as it is written, “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not and ears to hear not, down to this very day.” And David says, “Let their table (altar) become a snare and a trap, and a stumbling block and a retribution to them. Let their eyes be darkened to see not, and bend their backs forever.” (Rom 11:7-10)

Thus, there is the woman—the nation of Israel—who gives birth to Christ. But she also gives birth to other children. These are the sons of God and fellow heirs with Christ:

The sons of this age (fleshly men) marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead (spiritual men), neither marry nor are given in marriage; for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, *and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection*. (Luke 20:34-36)

All who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. (Rom 8:14)

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Gal 3:26-27

God promised that He would create enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. (Gen 3:15) The seed of the woman was Christ; the seed of the serpent were the children of disobedience from the Romans and Jews. (John 8:44)