

Chapter 12, beginning a three chapter intermission in the judgments being poured out on earth, gives us some behind-the-scenes information concerning Israel and Satan, describing Satan's desire to destroy Christ from the moment He was birthed from the nation of Israel. God miraculously protects both His Son and Israel and will permanently cast Satan out of heaven during the tribulation.

Rev. 11:15-19: The lesson book unfortunately skips over the sounding of the seventh trumpet, which is also referred to as the third woe. In these verses the trumpet is sounded and there is celebration and worship among the angelic beings and the 24 elders because "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (v. 15). These verses paint a picture of Christ's victory over Satan and the rebellious nations of the world as Christ returns to establish His eternal kingdom over the entire earth.

¹ 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.

"And there appeared a great wonder [sign] in heaven" - The same Greek word for "wonder" is translated in various places in the NT as "sign", "wonder", "miracle" and once as "token." A sign is something representative of something else. This is the first of seven "wonders" (or signs) John sees in Revelation.

"a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" - The fact that this woman is not an individual becomes apparent as we progress through the chapter. As a sign, she most likely represents the nation of Israel as John witnesses a brief supernatural backstory of Israel and Satan. One evidence pointed to by commentators as proof that the woman is Israel comes from Gen. 37:9-11 where Joseph describes a dream he had where the sun, moon and eleven stars bowed before him. His father Jacob recognized that in this dream he was the sun, Joseph's mother was the moon, and the eleven stars were Joseph's brothers. In John's vision Joseph is included in the crown of twelve stars which represent the 12 tribes of Israel.

"And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered" - Verse 5 tells us that the child is Jesus Christ, Who came from the nation of Israel. The labor pains may refer to the adversity the Jews have suffered from the time of their carrying away to Babylon through to the oppression of the Roman Empire when Jesus was born or perhaps their entire history as a nation.

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.

"And there appeared another wonder [sign] in heaven" - This is the second of the seven signs that John describes in Revelation.

"and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads" - This dragon refers to Satan, as this and the following verses will describe. The red color speaks of bloodshed and evil. The seven heads, ten horns and seven crowns ties the dragon to the Antichrist as described in Dan. 7:7, 20, 24 and the beast that John sees in Rev. 13:1. The meaning of the heads, horns, and crowns are explained in greater detail in chapter 17, but for now it is sufficient to understand that they represent the Antichrist's revived Roman empire and Satan as the power behind it.

"And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth" - This refers to Satan's rebellion against God when he convinced a third of the angelic host to follow him. They became fallen angels like him as they lost their positions in heaven and fell under the condemnation of God.

"and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born" - Satan understood the prophecies concerning the coming of Christ (perhaps better than God's people) and desperately wanted to destroy Jesus from the moment He was born. However, God the Father protected His Son, as we see in the next verse.

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.

"And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron" - Jesus Christ will rule the world with a rod of iron during His millennial kingdom. **Rev. 19:15** (speaking of Christ at His return) *"And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."*

"and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne" - Christ defeats Satan's efforts to destroy Him as He accomplishes everything His Father sent Him to do. Satan thought the cross was the way to destroy Jesus when in fact that was the main purpose for Jesus coming in the flesh (**1 Cor. 2:8** *"Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."*). Christ then ascends to His Father in heaven and takes His place at the right hand of His Father's throne.

"And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God" - The scene fast-forwards to the tribulation where the woman (Israel) must flee from the Antichrist. This is the danger that Jesus warned about in **Matt. 24:15-21** ¹⁵ *"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)"* ¹⁶ *Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: "17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: "18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. "19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! "20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: "21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."* However, God prepares a place for His people to hide from the Antichrist.

"that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days" - The Jews who have turned to Christ will be protected and cared for during the latter 3 ½ years (1,260 days) of the tribulation.

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.

There has always been a state of war between God and Satan, but these verses describe a battle where God is apparently taking the next step toward exercising His full sovereignty over His creation and toward Satan's final judgment by casting Satan out of heaven. Even after his original fall Satan still has had access to heaven and God's throne (Job 1:6, 2:1) from where he accuses God's people (v. 10). But now the time has come to revoke Satan's access and he doesn't go quietly as he rallies his fallen angels against Michael the Archangel (Jude 9) and his angelic army. Satan and his forces are defeated and his access to God's throne is taken away.

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.

In case we had any doubt as to who the "great dragon" is, he is further identified here as "the Devil" (the Greek word means "slanderer; accuser") and Satan (Greek word means "adversary; enemy"). He is described as the one who "deceiveth the whole world" because he is the "father of lies" (John 8:44), especially during the tribulation. He and his angels are cast out of heaven, never to return. The only place they have left to go is to the earth.

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.

At the defeat and expulsion of Satan a loud voice in heaven cries out in celebration that God is at last beginning to exercise His kingdom's strength and power to bring redemption through Jesus Christ to completion. God has always been sovereign and our salvation has always been certain in the mind of God, but thus far Satan has had access to heaven and the earth has been full of sin and rebellion against God. Our salvation has been incomplete since we still have to battle our sinful flesh. However Satan's expulsion from heaven is the next step that God is making to bring all of creation under His sovereign control. The voice also celebrates the end of Satan's access to accuse and condemn God's people before the throne of God. He currently does this apparently like a political slander campaign. Note the accusations Satan makes against Job in Job 1:9-11; 2:4-5.

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.

How do God's people respond to and overcome ("to conquer") Satan's slanderous accusations before God? This verse gives us the three necessary ingredients:

- **by the blood of the Lamb** – We cannot stand against Satan in our own righteousness, but when Satan accuses us of our sin, the blood of the Lamb our Savior cleanses us of all our unrighteousness (**1 John 1:9** "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."). Paul describes this defense against Satan's (or anyone else's) accusations in **Rom. 8:33-34**: "³³ Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. ³⁴ Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."
- **by the word of their testimony** – Our defense comes from Christ when we are willing to confess Him before the world (**Matt. 10:32** "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.")
- **they loved not their lives unto the death** – We should love Christ so much that we would rather die than deny Him! Few things motivate Christ to bless and come to the aid of those that love Him more than seeing that they are willing to give their life for Him. He may allow us to die physically but He will stand up for us when Satan accuses us as well as rewarding us for our willingness to die for Him. **Rev. 2:10b** "...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

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.

"Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them" - The loud voice continues by calling on all of heaven to rejoice at the expulsion of Satan for they will no longer be subjected to his evil presence.

"Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea!" - However, the same is not true for the inhabitants of the earth because now they will have Satan's full attention since his time will no longer be split between heaven and earth.

"for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" - Satan will realize that his final judgment from God is soon coming and his anger and hatred will push him to do as much damage as possible to the human race in the time he has left, particularly to God's people.

Verses 13-16: These verses describe how Satan will focus his wrath against Israel but God will supernaturally protect His people from Satan's attempts to destroy them.

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.

Satan has no power against God and so he will focus his anger and hatred on "the woman" (Israel). He will not go after Jews in general but against "the remnant," that is, the genuine believers in Jesus Christ that obey the commandments of God, as well as Gentile believers in Christ. We will see in chapter 13 that the Antichrist will go on a vendetta against believers in Christ because they will refuse to worship him.