

## REVELATION 12

Chapter 12 may give the clearest and most complete summary of events leading up to the final 3-1/2 years in heaven and earth available anywhere. Also read chapters 11 and 13 to provide context.

*Verse 1. "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;"*

*2." and she was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and pain to give birth.*

*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.*

*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.*

*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.*

*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 (3-1/2 years)."*

### **Who is this woman?**

The woman appeared in heaven (v1), yet gave birth on earth (v5), and was pursued – yet protected on earth (v6). She has both a spiritual identity, and an identity within the natural realm.

Possible candidates for the woman are the nation of Israel, and the church, and Mary. Since in Rom.9:6-8, Paul defines believers as the true Israel, we have good reasons to consider the church as the prime candidate. Furthermore, we read in (v17) that this woman has other children, when it says that the dragon went off to make war with the "rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus."

At the very least, this woman gives birth to believers. The fact that she appeared in heaven, defines her as having a spiritual identity. So whether or not physical Israel is involved, spiritual Israel is the church (Rom.9:8,4:11,16,Gal.3:29)

The woman was clothed with the sun. This was a brilliance and covering that is not a part of her, but a separate covering. There are many references in scripture to righteousness being applied as a covering for sin. If this sign relates to Israel, it is only the portion of Israel that is covered – and therefore saved and within the church.

The moon merely is revealed by the light, and is not the light itself. Jesus is defined as the source of light in John 1:4-5, and in other places. In Matt.16:17-18 we see that the church is built upon revelation from the Father ("Peter" meant stone, but the word for "rock" in these verses is used for bedrock (mantle rock). The church is not built upon Peter, but upon that which is revealed by the Father.

Righteous women only get pregnant when they are married. When we ask who's bride this is, there can only be one answer: The bride of Christ. I realize this complicates things when we consider the identity of the male child, but the other events in this chapter clearly move the timing to the last few years of Satan's influence, and of human-driven history.

For all practical purposes, spiritual Israel and the church are one and the same.

**We all know who the dragon is**, but what is it doing in Heaven? If it had been lurking in the throne room of chapters 4 and 5, surely someone would have noticed.

I believe heaven in this case represents the spiritual realm. This is the realm of authorities – good and bad – that can and do intervene in the natural physical realm. Dictates from the spirit realm, manifest in the physical realm as paranormal phenomenon. The variety is unlimited and unpredictable (only physical things can be predicted – unless of course, we’re talking about the weather). Such interventions may include anything from parlor-scale telekinesis and fortune-telling, to the parting of the Red Sea.

The dragon had seven heads and ten horns. We will see this symbolism a couple more times later in Revelations, and we will need to recall then that it was first seen here as a description of Satan.

12:4 His tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven, and threw them to earth. This is generally assumed to mean that at some point after Lucifer rebelled, he took a third of the heavenly host with him. I have no problem with this.

I have always assumed that Satan absconded with his third when he was caught in rebellion in heaven, but *nobody* steals from God! We first see Satan in the Garden of Eden as a serpent, working a con on Eve.

Now God had in fact given authority to Adam and Eve when He commissioned them to rule the earth (Gen.1:26-28). When Adam and Eve obeyed the serpent however, they gave him their authority, and the serpent became the dragon.

When Jesus was being tempted Satan offered Him all the kingdoms of the world, claiming they had been handed over to him. Jesus did not dispute this claim. This time Satan was not lying (Lk.4:5-7)

I believe it is significant that in subsequent chapters we will see some of the plagues targeting 1/3 of the this and 1/3 of that. There is obviously 1/3 of something that needs a little work.

So we have this dragon with spiritual authority (and thereby physical) authority poised before the woman who is about to give birth. He is clearly unable to attack the woman, but figures he can handle the newborn infant. Now if the woman was Israel and the infant was the God of Israel, who would *you* rather mess with?

### **Who is the male-child?**

The male child was born on earth yet of spiritual origin (v1-2). He Was caught up to God, yet he is to rule the nations of the earth (v5). The male child likewise has a spiritual origin and identity, as well as a very real identity and presence within the natural realm.

It was the intent of the dragon to devour the child at birth, but the child was immediately caught up to God and and to His throne – well out of the dragon’s reach.

Many assume that this male child is Jesus, and although I am open to discussion on this, I have a problem or two: Jesus was never taken to heaven for protection against the dragon. He was “raptured” off to Egypt for a few years,” but I don't think many would mistake that for heaven. Furthermore, He isn’t scheduled to be born on earth in the near future. So if this chapter is about future events, this child cannot be Jesus.

Add to this the fact that Satan was given access to Jesus to torture Him to death, He was obviously not raptured off to heaven for protection. When Jesus finally did return to heaven, I am sure one exhausted dragon was glad to see Him go.

What about this “rule the nations with a rod of iron” clause? In Rev.2:26-27 we see this very phrase being applied to the believers who overcame at Thyratira. In fact, it goes even further. In 2:28 Jesus says “I will give you the morning star.” Since Jesus wouldn’t be speaking of Himself in this context, of whom or what is He speaking? Isaiah 14:12 refers to one as the “star of the morning, son of dawn”; The context to follow identifies this as Satan. This “rule the nations with a rod of iron phrase is also found in Psalms 1:7&8. In light of the above, these Psalms verses must apply to more than Jesus alone.

If this man-child is not Jesus, could it be the church getting raptured? Difficult, because she has other kids who are still on earth, at least some of whom get persecuted (12:17). Meanwhile, while she is enjoying 3-1/2 years of protection in the wilderness while still on earth (I am assuming of course, that there is no such thing as a wilderness in heaven).

A clue to these mysteries might be derived from another image of the church: the temple. Both Paul in 1Cor.3:10-17, 2Cor.6:16 and Peter in 1Pe.2:5 refer to the church as the temple of God.

The earthly temple was an upscale version of the original tabernacle built during the exodus. The tabernacle itself was built per specifications of the one in heaven. This tabernacle had three physical sections involving increasing levels of purity and different sources of light. If the church is God’s temple, then we might well expect to see three different levels of believer, corresponding to levels of intimacy with God. Revelations 12 seems to reveal these:

1. The man-child who is immediately raptured to God and to His throne
2. The woman protected and provided for for 3-1/2 years
3. “The rest of her children” who are subject to persecution during this period.

### **The courtyard**

I believe “the rest of her seed” to be the believers represented by the courtyard that gets trampled underfoot by the gentiles for 3-1/2 years in Rev.11.

In Rev. 11:1-2 Although John is no longer in the throne room, he is still in the Spirit. He is handed a rod and told to measure the temple. Since it was unlikely John’s captors (holding him on Patmos) were going to grant him missionary leave, he was not going to be making any measurements on the physical temple – which had been destroyed by this time in history anyway.

Consider the parable of the 5 wise and 5 foolish virgins. All were believers, all were pure, and all were invited, but some had to stay outside while the marriage feast was going on.

Courtyard Christians should never be considered less worthy – especially since none of us are worthy. Recall that the sacrificial animal was slain outside the gate. All Christians have come through the gate because of our acceptance of the sacrifice of Jesus.

The first item inside the gate is the bronze alter, where all or part of the carcass was burned. As we go forward as believers, there are elements of our former dead life that must be consumed and left behind.

The next thing we encounter is the bronze laver, a large basin of water where cleansing took place. One of the first priorities upon entering this life is exploring it – studying God’s word. The cleansing effect of Gods word is mentioned in Eph.5:26

The lighting in this courtyard was the natural light of day. This could represent the natural reasoning and scholarship of human intellect.

### **The holy place**

This was where a more intimate level of the communion with God took place.

1. Ritual purification was required before entry.
2. It was indoors and protected from the elements.
3. The lighting was the oil in the menorah, a type of the Holy Spirit. With the light of the Holy Spirit, deeper insights would be available that could be derived by logic and scholarship alone.
4. The table of showbread was provided with fresh bread daily. This could be related to divine provision of mana for Israel during the exodus.
5. The alter of incense was before the heavy curtain guarding the Holy of Holies. Incense represents prayers, the primary means of daily contact we have with our creator.

### **The holy of holies**

One strike and you're out.

1. There is no tolerance for impurity here
2. The arc of the covenant is before you
  - a. It contains the law, the standard of perfection
  - b. The rod of Aaron who's budding confirmed of the legitimacy of Aaron's priesthood.
  - c. A sample of the mana that was provided for Israel during the exodus.
3. The arc of the covenant was the presence of God from which judgment went forth.
3. Above the arc of the covenant is the mercy seat. Seats are for sitting, and there is one who is qualified to sit there.

The holy of holies represented the throne room of God on earth. In the case of some of histories monarchs one risked death if they dared to enter the throne room unbidden or unqualified – so it was in the case of the holy of holies.

I can only think of one other candidate for this male-child, and it frankly makes me a little uneasy: Would this be the 144 thousand mentioned in Rev.14:1-5?

Other than a lack of other candidates, some of God's judgment does not begin in Revelation until some point in time after the 144k have been sealed. Similarly, in 12:6, the war in heaven does not begin until the man-child is caught up to the throne of God – the place of authority.

We learn more in 14:5: These have been purchased from among men as first-fruits to God and to the Lamb. So clearly, these are a special category of Christians.

### **Revelations 12:6**

We have read repeatedly of serious plagues taking place in a 3-1/2 year period, yet here we see this woman remaining on earth during this time. The "logic" I've heard claiming the church would be gone during this time was based on a claim that God wouldn't have Christians on earth while the plagues are happening. This reasoning doesn't work very well as long as this verse (Rev.12:6) remains in the Bible. Beyond this, consider other times in the Bible when God's people were kept safe while disaster took place where they had been (the plagues in Egypt, Noah, Lot, and others). Yet another underlying principle

is that the effect of God's judgments has always been to use them to deliver and protect His people. Daniel 12:1 provides a clear coincidence of judgment and deliverance.

### **Where is this place in the wilderness?**

By the term "wilderness" we at least know that it is outside the comfort and security of human controlled infrastructures. It will also be a place prepared by God, and His people will be fed there, so this will not be wilderness in its natural state. I don't think it will be bad: Remember that the original wilderness place was the Garden of Eden.

I'll admit to being uncomfortably broad in what I allow interpretation-wise, but I believe the cause of Christ has often been hurt by an unnecessary narrowness among pedantic believers. Consider the medieval assertion that the world was flat based upon phrases like "to the ends of the earth". On the other hand, when we have themes repeatedly emphasized in the Bible, we have no interpretive options. In the case of the need for the blood atonement provided by Jesus Christ for instance I am extremely narrow. If you disagree with me on that one, you are simply wrong. The application in this case is that I allow that this place may in fact be a condition that will exist in numerous physical locations world-wide – I don't insist, I just allow. Either way, should the need arise I will trust God to show me where to go and how to get there. In fact, verse 14 assures us that God will have Eagle Airlines standing by to evacuate us to safety at that time.

Vs.12:6 The transportation was provided by God. There are elements here that are exactly what would take place if there were a wedding going on. The bridegroom would have prepared a place, and when all was ready, he would suddenly appear to pick up his bride and take her to that place.

Consider also **Is 43:19 Behold, I will do a new thing; now shall it spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.**

### **12:7 War in heaven**

Heaven in this case is not likely the throne room of God, but rather a reference to the spirit realm in general. Recall from earlier discussion that his spirit realm is the position from which rule on earth originated. Mandates from this realm can override the natural laws of physics that normally guide the natural realm. It is therefore the originating position of all magic and miracles – all phenomenon of a supernatural nature.

Satan acquired authority in the heavens that had originally been given to Adam and Eve for the purpose of ruling earth. The battle of saints since that time has been for the retaking of that territory of heavenly authority from Satan (who acquired it from Adam and Eve).

The role of angels in this is defined in Heb.1:14 "Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?" So Michael and his angels are waging war on behalf of the saints. Indeed the victory is attributed to the saints in verse 11, where it says that "...they over came him...".

In verse 8 we see that there was no longer a place for the devil and his angels. This place of authority has finally been retaken by the saints. From the fall of man until this point, the kingdoms of this world were legitimately ruled by Satan through the authority established by God (Lk.4:6). Paul exhorts people to be subject to governing authorities because all authority is ultimately established by God (Rom.13:1). From the point of

Rev.12:8 however, when the place of authority has been retaken by the saints of God, the government established by Satan is no longer backed by Godly authority, and to serve such a government would now be to serve Satan.

It's party time in heaven (Rev.12:9-11). The kingdom of God and the authority of Christ have come (vs.10). This reveals that the authority was not in proper hands until this point.

The earth – the natural realm – now has a very furious and frightened dragon on its hands. Furthermore this dragon controls – albeit illegitimately now – the earthly government. The serpent has returned to his original spiritual status.

The end game is on, and the first order of business for the dragon is to seek vengeance upon the saints who kicked him out of heaven (vs. 11), and he pours his energy into persecuting the church.

12:14-16

Eagle Airlines evacuates the church (Be sure and have your reservations ahead of time). It is evident that the church is still on earth, because the dragon knows where they are, and if they were in heaven, he'd know better than to try.

The sea is used in Revelations to indicate nations and peoples (17:15), and when the dragon sends out a flood after the woman, it would likely be the marshaling of the world's armies and Gestapo he now controls (though without Godly authority). Another reason this would not be a natural earthly flood is that the earth itself now intervenes and swallows the flood.

Rev.12:9-17, take 2

Vs. 9 Satan loses his position of authority over the earth that he had been occupying in the spirit realm. Recall that the authority he did have was that which he had conned out of Eve and Adam. He no longer has authority, but – make no mistake – he still has power in the sense that a criminal network has power but no authority.

Vs. 10 The saints of God have now regained their rightful position of authority over the earth which was created and intended for mankind (Gen.1:26-28).

Vs. 11 The legal basis for their claim against Satan was that they had appropriated the freedom from the curse of the fall through the blood of Jesus. This made them eligible for the position of authority. In fact, Eph.2:6 tells us that we are actually seated with Christ Jesus in heavenly places.

From this position of authority the words we speak into the natural realm carry authority in both spiritual and natural realms. Our words now express and activate the will of God into the natural realm.

This overcoming was also based upon a total commitment to the battle. A soldier entering battle may kill, be killed, or both. The physical investment in life is only meaningful as it relates to God.

Vs. 12 Heaven is relieved of a bad neighborhood and replaced by saints. Meanwhile, real estate values on earth plummet. Satan went from a powerful corrupt world ruler with authority to a powerful corrupt world ruler without authority – and boy is he mad.

Thus begins phase one, of an intense period of misery on planet earth. Due to a highly dubious interpretation of a single verse in Daniel 9, many are taught that 3-1/2 years of mild tribulation take place, followed by 3/1/2 years of severe tribulation. Without this

interpretation there is no Biblical basis for assigning a total of 7 years to Satan's fallen reign.

What I do see is that Satan at this point has no spiritual authority, and will only have political power on earth for a limited time before he is totally crushed. With the exception of God Himself – the ultimate author of the universe – a prerequisite for having authority is being under authority. Therefore even while Satan had authority, there were limits to what he was allowed to do. Job 1:2 is one of several examples of this. 2Thes.6-8 speaks of a restraint upon lawlessness that will at some point be removed .

Now Satan's government has no restrictions. The man of sin is revealed in full true colors, and is free to conquer the globe unhindered.

Vs. 13 When Satan is driven out of heaven, he soon seeks to get even with the saints who overcame him, so he implements a program of global persecution.

Vs. 14 God provides a means of escape to a place He has prepared. It has been tempting to some to try and define what these two wings of a great eagle mean, but I have no clue at this point. There is also nothing here about which catering service God chooses to provide the food.

Vs. 15 Satan marshals the nations of the world to pursue the escaping church, but the earth intercedes. This is interesting: In Gen 3:17-19 the ground is cursed to yield thorns and to extract much labor in exchange for its produce. This was the result of Satan taking over the place of authority over the earth. Now however, saints are in control and the earth itself is serving the saints

This swallowing up of those who are pursuing the church in the wilderness meshes nicely with the supernatural disasters that play havoc with the intents and activities of mankind. Even as God opened the sea to swallow the pursuit of the Israelites, the ground itself takes a bite this time.

When we consider the prelude to the seven trumpets (feast of trumpets?) in Rev. 8:1-5, We see that the final seal of authority is released. The nature of this authority involves the prayers of all the saints being recognized in heaven, and sent down to earth for their manifestation. The authority represented by this seal may well be the recommissioning of the saints of God to the position of authority over the earth they have taken back from Satan.

The first four trumpets release events on earth that could be construed as extreme natural disasters. (This is a little reminiscent of the first four seals in chapter 6 that could be seen as the natural result of human nature unleashed.)

8:3 indicates that God added to the prayers of the saints, so the next three trumpets are of a different type. This combination of objectives of the saints and God is somewhat indicative of the unity between God and his people.

In any case, as of 12:8-11 the earth is now serving the purposes of God and the saints, rather than that of Satan.

### **Who are “the rest of her children” of Rev 12:17?”**

Here they are defined as Christians, and they were already Christian at the time the woman was taken to the wilderness. They missed both the rapture and the departure of the woman to the wilderness.

Some may try to argue that they suddenly became Christians when they saw the woman depart. I guess if someone wanted to read it that way they could convince themselves, but it's obviously not implied here. In fact, the words "keep" and "hold" are used to describe them. "Keeping" and "holding" both take a little time to prove.

A better model would be of the five foolish virgins found in Mt.25:1-13. The context was that of a wedding feast. All ten were virgins, pure and qualified, and all were invited. The difference was the amount of oil they carried. At a slightly deeper level of detail, the difference between the five wise and five foolish virgins was level of voluntary preparation.

### **What does the church do in the wilderness?**

For whatever else people may believe, most see this 3-1/2 year period as the final half of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Dan.9:24. Among other things, this period concludes all prophecy relating to history, and concludes with God's eternal reign. Therefore, any prophetic insights that may be available in the feasts of Israel, the temple, the letters, the words of Jesus, and anyone else anointed, would come to conclusion in this period.

The final feast of Israel is the feast of booths, wherein the Israelites camp out in huts made from natural temporary materials, and re-enact the period of the exodus. The law required that this feast is to be celebrated with joy.

The historical context was that plagues and disasters had judged the nation that had enslaved and persecuted them, and swallowed up that nation's final effort at pursuit.

In the cases where Jesus uses a feast in His words, there is always the element of some who had been invited being left out, and it is always due to their own lack of obedience or diligence. In one case, those who had been invited (Israel for instance – the natural olive branch of Rom,11:16-20) refused to come. And so others were invited.

The final invitation to the church of Leodicea is a feast with Jesus – significantly, He first comes to their place to dine, and then takes them to His place to rule (Rev.3:20-21). All considered, this scene is very likely the marriage feast of the Lamb.

By-the-way on another subject: For the *first* half of the seventieth week of Daniel, consider the 3-1/2 years of Jesus' ministry on earth. Keep in mind that there is no seven year period mentioned in the book of Revelations, and if you start adding up the references to 3-1/2 years in Revelations, you are in for a lot more than seven years.