

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Revelation 12:1-17 | Session 16 | The War Against Messiah and the Hatred of God's People

In the book of Revelation, there are seven pairs of visions given to John. The first pair of visions pertains to events that are taking place in Heaven, and the second part of the pair concerns events taking place on Earth.

The First Vision in Heaven (4:1-5:14).

The First Vision on Earth (6:1-7:8).

The Second Vision in Heaven (7:9-8:6).

The Second Vision on Earth (8:7-11:14).

The Third Vision in Heaven (11:15-18).

The Third Vision on Earth (11:19).

The Fourth Vision in Heaven (12:1-12)

The Fourth Vision on Earth (12:13-13:8)

THE FOURTH VISION IN HEAVEN (12:1-12)

THE BOOK OF REVELATION IS NOT ALWAYS SEQUENTIAL

We come to the central subject of the entire book, found in the central pair of the seven visions and the literary center of the book. Chapters 12-15 relate to the actual unveiling or revealing of the glorious Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The book of Revelation is chronological only in the sense that it moves forward. It progresses toward the culmination of the return of the King of kings. It develops a reason for a new Heaven and the new Earth. It does this via the opening of the Seals, the sounding of the Trumpets, and the pouring out of Vial judgments, but it is not always sequential; it jumps to the future, it sometimes pauses the action, or it goes back into time (which we will see in this chapter).

As we look at chapter twelve, the Trumpet judgments have all sounded. There is a break in the action before the final plagues, contained in the Seven Vials (or bowls), are poured out on the earth.

This fourth central vision in Heaven is historical in that some events in chapter 12 chronologically come before chapter six, although written later as John sees the vision.

Satan wrought havoc on the earth and killed the Two Witnesses in chapter 11, but what we don't know is *how* Satan came to be on the earth. Therefore, we are taken back to a prophetic time in chapter 12 to find out. If you want a behind-the-scenes look at the Christmas story, Revelation 12 is where you should turn.

THE ATTACK OF SATAN ON EARTH WILL INTENSIFY AGAINST GOD'S PEOPLE

In the next several chapters, Satan is shown attacking the nation of Israel; He will use two human beings to do his bidding, or, as they are called, beasts: The Antichrist and the False Prophet.

It may look like all is lost in chapters 12 and 13. It may feel that God is no longer in control. But never base the discovery of truth on how you feel or how something looks. God is always in control. In a couple of weeks, when we get to Chapter 14, we will be presented with six scenes of hope that will prove it.

But in this session, Satan's hatred for the Jewish people and their Messiah is revealed. This attack on the Messiah and His people might give us a better perspective on why our world is in the mess that it's in.

We have an enemy, one that even we in the body of Christ must put on armor each day to stand against (Ephesians 6:11). While we shouldn't obsess over the possibility of demons, we shouldn't ignore their potential influence either. The physical world is often the stage for a covert struggle between the angels of God and the fallen (demons) angels of the evil one. We get stronger by taking on the challenge of spiritual warfare. As the end times approach the attacks of Satan will intensify against God's People.

JOHN SEES A GREAT SIGN IN HEAVEN

Verse 1 —

The next several verses are a history lesson showing the strategy of Satan, which he tried, and it didn't work; To stop the birth of Jesus Christ.

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, or better translated, *sign*. What does that word *sign* tell us? We should not take what we are about to read as literal, but as a *sign* of something else. John writes it is a **great sign**. Therefore, it is a sign of importance and significance.

A woman clothed with the sun,

The moon under her feet,

And upon her head a crown of twelve stars.

Some believe incorrectly that the **woman** is Mary. Those with a Catholic background may have seen icons and pictures of Mary depicted as this woman as the queen of heaven. To come up with that faulty interpretation, the Catholic Church has made up a narrative to fit its theology.

The prophetic dream of Joseph in Genesis 37:9-10 likens Jacob and Rachel to the sun and moon respectively, using them as symbols. Some say it is Leah who was also Jacob's wife, and not Rachel, since Rachel already died by Genesis 35 (The point is: Joseph was to be preeminent over his entire family). The brothers in that passage are, in Joseph's dream, stars who will bow down to him (See Genesis 42:6; 43:26; 44:14).

There is no mistaking the Revelation passage and the Genesis passage as one. Therefore, the **woman** in 12:1 is the sign of the entirety of Israel, the patriarch, matriarch, and tribes. There is no reason to make things up. Let Scripture interpret Scripture.

Once we figure out who the **Woman** is, the entire passage makes sense.

THE STORY OF REDEMPTION IS UNVEILED THROUGHOUT THE SCRIPTURE

Verse 2 —

Being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. What John sees is the beginning of the Jewish people and the prophecy of the coming Messiah promised in Genesis 3:15. That promise foretold of a time in which the seed of the woman would crush the head of Satan.

It would take 4,000 years for the birth described here to come to pass. This birth had always been the object of Israel's hope; everything pointed to the Messiah, and His coming was the subject of the prophets. The strategy of Satan was to frustrate God's promise and to stop the birth of the Messiah. Satan's goal was to stand in the way of the promised Redeemer in Genesis 3:15.

Dispensationalists, like myself, are often accused of disregarding earlier revelations from God and believing they have no relevance for today's believers. ¹ They say we take away the Old Testament and the Hebrew Scriptures. ² But that is absolutely a false and, might I say, ignorant accusation. Paul said to the elders of the church in Ephesus, *"I have not shunned to declare to unto you all the counsel of God"* (Acts 20:27).

A dispensationalist interprets the Scripture literally and acknowledges that God engages with humanity differently in distinct eras and periods (Or, dispensations).

If you want to know the story of redemption, you cannot know it without understanding the Hebrew Scriptures and the Gospels. All Scripture is inspired, and all Scripture is profitable. We must study the entire counsel of God; it all comes together as one account, but we must rightly divide the book.

By rightly dividing, we recognize certain spiritual principles that we no longer apply to our lives. For example, the principle of the tithe, or cities of refuge, or clean and unclean animals. Likewise, moral responsibility, like honoring the Sabbath, or the Nazarite vow, and the list could go on. Those are important principles to know, but not to apply to our Christian life. If we appropriate them for doctrine for Christian living, we will slip into the Law. Therefore, we recognize what is intended for Israel's instruction and what is meant for the Body of Christ. This is how a dispensationalist and a *rightly dividing* student of the Word of God interprets Scripture.

SATAN'S ATTEMPTS TO THWART GOD'S REDEMPTIVE PLAN

In the Revelation 12 passage, we see Satan's plot to halt the birth of the Messiah, and it is crucial to recognize that he made several attempts in the Hebrew Scriptures and the Gospels.

For example, why does the Bible record Cain murdering Abel in Genesis 4? In 1 John 3:12, we are told that Cain's works were evil and his brother's righteous. Satan, a murderer from the beginning, likely reasoned that the Messiah would come through *righteous* Abel's lineage. By taking out Abel, the problem would be solved.

¹ Ironside, Harry. Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth. Pg.13

² Vance Laurence M. Quoted in the article *Free Grace and Ultra-Dispensationalism*. Grace in Focus magazine.. Grace Evangelical Society. Denton, TX. September/October 2023

Or Genesis 6:1-4, that strange passage where we read about the *sons of God*, whom I take to be fallen angels, cohabitating with human women. Why would that happen? Satan was at work trying to mix or damage the genetics of humanity so that a Messiah couldn't be born who was fully man.

Or what about Pharaoh, who attempted to drown all the male infants in the Nile to stop the Messiah from coming from the Hebrew race? (Exodus 1:16).

Later, in Matthew 2:3, Herod killed all (male) children under two years old in Bethlehem to stop the King who was prophesied to be born.

Repeatedly, we see Satan's attempt to stop the Messiah. When he failed, even after the Messiah was born, Satan worked overtime to keep Him from fulfilling His mission—and while not blamed outright in the passages, Satan perhaps even tried to drown Jesus on the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 8:26; Mark 4:39; Luke 8:24).

I have only chosen a few examples for our class, but we could spend an entire sermon series looking at Satan's attempts to thwart God's plan of the ages, of which each attempt required Divine intervention. It all stems from God's promise in Genesis 3:15.

That is what the entire Old Testament is about. That is dispensational truth. If you understand it, then the Bible makes sense, and the details of the Old Testament fit into place. Misunderstand it and confusion will be sown.

This **great wonder of a woman, being with child and delivering** is not Mary or the Catholic Church. We reject that interpretation outright. The Genesis 37 parallel is clear; The **woman** is the "sign" of Israel giving birth to Jesus Christ, the hope of Israel.

A GREAT RED DRAGON

Verse 3 —

And **another wonder** was seen by John **in heaven...a great red dragon**. We don't have to guess who this is. Verse nine tells us it is *that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan*. **Having seven heads and ten horns**. We have seen from our study in the book of Daniel, these heads, and horns are signs of earthly dominion. Seven kingdoms sought to annihilate the nation of Israel; Egypt, Syria, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome—these could be what the seven heads signify. Also, the **ten horns** we discovered in Daniel are the horns of the final confederacy or empire. ³

Satan's color **red**, or the color of blood, could be a *sign* of his cruelty and blood-thirstiness (John 8:44). But the idea here is a sign of earthly power.

THE FALL OF THE DRAGON

Verse 4 —

And his tail drew (literally dragged) **the third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth**. Does this speak of Satan's first rebellion and the angels (demons) who fell with him? (Isaiah 14:12-15). If the **stars**

³ See my notes on the book of Daniel. <https://rogerfeenstra.com/bible-study-notes/>

mean angels, which in verses 7-9 it appears it does, it certainly shows his power over some of them as a third part of the angels followed him in his great rebellion.

The dragon stood before the woman...For to devour her child as soon as it was born. The verb **stood** is in the *active* form, which shows something ongoing, so **stands** might be a better way to look at it. Imagine the devil standing by as Mary labored to give birth.

Genesis 3:15 marked the beginning of a great conflict between Satan and God's plan for the Redeemer and His people. It is a thread that runs from Genesis through Revelation 20 until, finally, Satan is cast into the Lake of Fire.

Each time Satan made his attempt to stop God's plan, Divine power ensued to thwart the devil's subtlety. We see it unfold before us as we read Scripture. From the corruption of mankind, to Abraham, to Jacob and his family, to the Nation of Israel, to the royal line of David, to the Nation again, to the Seed of the woman... Satan's goal has always been to **devour**.

THE BIRTH AND ASCENSION

Verse 5 —

She brought forth a man (Literally, male) **child, who was to rule all nations...** The words **who was** mean *who would* or *who is about to* rule **with a rod of iron** (see Psalm 2:9; Revelation 19:15) since Jesus has not ascended to the throne yet, but will at His second coming.

Her child was caught up unto God and to his throne. Some believe this is a reference to the Rapture. But taken in context, this cannot be the case for two reasons.

First, we have established throughout our study that the Church is not the subject of Revelation.

Second, the entire context of this passage is about Israel and Israel's Messiah.

Today, Jesus, after ascending into heaven, is with **God** the Father (Acts 1:9). He is at the right hand of the throne of God the Father. Jesus is not on his throne, (the throne of David), but one day, He will be. Satan's attempt to stop the Messiah failed, but he has not relented. In verse 6, he turns his attention to God's people to wipe them out so that no Kingdom can be established.

THE DISPENSATION OF GRACE FITS HERE, BETWEEN VERSES 5 AND 6 (READ EPHESIANS 3)

THE JEWS FLEE FOR THREE AND A HALF YEARS

Verse 6 —

This is the second half of the tribulation. The Jews will have to flee from Jerusalem to a place in the wilderness (some have suggested Petra, in Jordan), where for 1,260, this remnant of Jews will be nourished. Wherever it is they flee to, it is **a place prepared of God**. We don't know who **they** are that **feed her**.

Jesus spoke of this fleeing to the wilderness in his Olivet discourse in Matthew 24:15,16. Similar to the desert wandering of the Jews after their escape from Egypt, this is how the nation of Israel survives the Tribulation.

WAR IN HEAVEN

Verse 7 —

And there was war in heaven. We don't think of war when we think of Heaven, yet this is what we read here. **Michael and his angels going forth fought against the dragon.** Michael will take the initiative to fight, not the **Dragon.** Satan, who has, until this time, had access to the heavens, is cast down. In our Daniel study, Michael was described as *one of the chief princes* (Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1). In the book of Jude, he is called *the archangel* (vs. 9). Michael is the one who makes war against the Dragon. Likewise, it is not the Dragon who makes war against the *man-child* (Messiah). Rather, his war, after he is cast down to the earth, is against the woman (Israel) who brought forth the man-child (12:13). The Dragon's dominion covers all the powers and governments of the world. This dominion is about to become the sovereignty of our Lord and of His Christ! (See 11:15).

THE RESULTS OF THE WAR

Verse 8 —

And prevailed not; neither was their place found anymore in heaven. Michael wins this war, and the purpose of removing Satan from his access to Heaven is accomplished.

Verse 9 —

If we didn't figure it out by now, verse 9 is explicit about who it is that is cast down: **the great dragon...that old serpent...the Devil...Satan.** And it is he who is the *deceiver of the whole world.*

PROCLAMATION OF VICTORY

Verses 10-12 —

Here we have a proclamation of victory. It is likely not a song, since John could have used the word *to sing* (Revelation 15:3). While it is a singular **voice**, it comprises **our brethren**, which would show to me that this is being recited by those who will have been caught up to heaven out of the *great tribulation.*

The result of Satan being cast down is **woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea.** But, when Satan is cast down, he has **but a short time.**

To put this in perspective, the Beast (Antichrist) will be reigning on the earth during the first half of the Tribulation, but in his mortal human form, now in the middle of the *70th week*, the *third woe comes; Satan is cast out.* This last half is truly the *great and terrible day of the Lord.* It brings us to the next, the Fourth Vision on Earth.

THE FOURTH VISION, ON EARTH (12:13-13:8)

PERSECUTION AND FLIGHT OF ISRAEL

Verse 13,14 —

The word *child* is inserted. The Greek word is *arsen*, which just means a male. **Two wings of a great eagle** need not be taken literally, since it is used in Exodus 19:4 to indicate God's protection for the nation of Israel. That **she** (Israel) **might fly into the wilderness** shows how quickly she had to escape being savagely attacked by the wrath of Satan.

Verse 15,16 —

As a flood after the woman that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood, I see no reason this could not be a literal flood. Fleeing to the desert, there are many flash floods; in fact, Carol and I saw one forming over a cliff when we were in the Judean desert in 2015. And, just like the Israelites were delivered from the Red Sea, there is no reason the ground could not open during this flood and save Israel here.

Verse 17 —

Failing in his attempt to destroy this fleeing remnant, **the dragon was wrath with the woman**. He turns his forces against the remnant of her seed. This remnant is a specific group; believing Jews who, 1) **keep the commandments**. 2) **have the testimony of Jesus Christ**. These are Jews who were addressed in chapters two and three who were instructed to *overcome and endure*, and are those who do not take the mark of the beast in Revelation 14:12-13, and many will die in the Lord before His second coming.

We will see more of the beast and his mark in our next session.

Revelation | Session 16 Outline

- ◆ The book of Revelation is not sequential.
- ◆ The Attack of Satan on Earth will Intensify Against God's People.
- ◆ A Great Sign in Heaven.
- ◆ The Story of Redemption is Unveiled Throughout the Scripture.
- ◆ Satan's Attempt to Thwart God's Redemptive Plan.
- ◆ A Great Red Dragon Appears.
- ◆ The Fall of the Dragon.
- ◆ The Birth of Messiah and His Ascension.
- ◆ The Jews Flee for 3.5 Years.
- ◆ War in Heaven.
- ◆ The Results of the War.
- ◆ The Proclamation of Victory.
- ◆ The Persecution and Flight of Israel.