

# Ministry of Grace

## Revelation Chapter 12

<sup>1</sup>And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. <sup>2</sup>She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth.

<sup>3</sup>And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. <sup>4</sup>His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. <sup>5</sup>She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, <sup>6</sup>and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

<sup>7</sup>Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, <sup>8</sup>but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. <sup>9</sup>And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world--he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

<sup>10</sup>And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. <sup>11</sup>And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. <sup>12</sup>Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"

<sup>13</sup>And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. <sup>14</sup>But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. <sup>15</sup>The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. <sup>16</sup>But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. <sup>17</sup>Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.

## Notes

### Revelation 12:1, 2

**<sup>1</sup>And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. <sup>2</sup>She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth.**

“**And**” – This is translated from the Greek conjunction *kai*, which means “and” or “also.” Some translations have this as “now” which, although it is an acceptable translation of *kai*, seems to imply a function of time, which is not implied by the Greek word.

“**sign**” – This is from the Greek word *sēmeion*, which means “a sign or miracle with a spiritual end and purpose.” Even though we are taking a literal interpretive view of Revelation this tells us that the following is not to be taken literally but figuratively. In other words, the sign has to be interpreted.

“**appeared**” – This is from the Greek verb *horaō*, which means “to see.” It is expressed in the aorist tense (indicating past action at a point in time) and passive voice, so it should be translated as “was seen.”

“**a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.**” – This is most likely a reference to Joseph’s dream in Genesis chapter 37. In that dream, Joseph’s father, Jacob is depicted as the sun; Rachael, his mother, is the moon; and the 12 stars are the 12 tribes of Israel. In responding to the description of the dream, Jacob clearly understood Joseph to be referring to Israel (Jacob) and his descendants.

Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?"  
(**Genesis 37:9, 10**) [ESV]

Some (those who hold to a post-tribulation rapture) would have this woman be representative of the church, but verse 5 makes it clear that this woman represents Israel. Israel is often pictured as the wife of God (**Isaiah 54:5-6; Jeremiah 31:32; Ezekiel 16:4-8; Hosea 3:1**).

“**crown**” – This is the Greek word *stephanos* or “wreath.” It is a victor’s crown.

“**she was pregnant**” – This is another indication that the woman represents Israel and not the church. Israel is pictured by the prophet Micah as a mother in childbirth bringing forth the Messiah (**Micah 5:1-3**), but the church is represented as the promised bride of Christ who is not yet married.

### Revelation 12:3

**<sup>3</sup>And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems.**

“**red dragon**” – Literally “a great fire-like dragon.” Verse nine tells us that this represents Satan.

“**seven heads**” and “**seven diadems**” – These heads may possibly represent the seven world kingdoms through history: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the Antichrist’s revived Roman empire. This is further supported by the seven crowns, from the Greek word *diadema*, which are “crowns of royalty, symbolizing power and authority.” In the vision of chapter 17 the beast is said to have seven heads and ten horns like this dragon and there the seven heads are said to be seven mountains:

This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he does come he must remain only a little while. (**Revelation 17:9-10**) [ESV]

In this passage the “seven mountains” is probably another reference to the seven world kingdoms through history as mentioned above. The reference to the seven kings is then an explanation of the kings of those kingdoms. However, there is another interpretation of the “seven mountains.” Some Bible scholars believe that this is a reference to the city of Rome which is built on seven hills.

“**ten horns**” – These very likely represent the ten rulers of the final world empire who will rule with the Antichrist. There are other passages in this book in which we are told that the horns represent kings:

And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast. (**Revelation 17:12**) [ESV]

"Thus he said: 'As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings. (**Daniel 7:23, 24**) [ESV]

## **Revelation 12:4**

**<sup>4</sup>His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it.**

“**a third of the stars of heaven**” – Stars are common symbols for angelic beings throughout the book of Revelation. This may be a reference to the action described in verse 9 where Satan and his angelic horde are cast out of heaven. In the current verse we are told that they are thrown to the earth. It is also possible that these stars are the angelic beings who joined with Satan in his original rebellion against God:

"How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit. (**Isaiah 14:12-15**) [ESV]

One of the reasons that this passage is seen by many as Satan's original fall is the fact that Jesus said:

And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. (**Luke 10:18**)

In this verse the writer used the imperfect tense (past tense of continuous action) rather than a proleptic aorist for the word "saw." This indicates that it was an action that happened in the past rather than the future. However – given that it is the Son of God speaking, it is possible that he is referring to having seen it in the future since he is not bound by time.

**"the dragon stood before the woman ... so that when she bore her child he might devour it"** – Throughout history Satan has attacked the people of God in order to foil God's plan; from Cain's murder of righteous Abel, to the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt and Pharaoh's attempted murder of all male children, to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and the carrying off of the Israelites to Babylon, to the murder of the children in Bethlehem in an attempt to prevent the advent of the Messiah, to the crucifixion of the Messiah. This verse shows Satan poised to destroy Christ in His incarnation.

### **Revelation 12:5**

**<sup>5</sup>She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne,**

**"a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron"** – Some would have this be a reference to the church which will rule with Christ and the expression "caught up" referring to the rapture of the church. However, the words "male child" are translated from the Greek words *huion arrena*, which specifically identifies the child as "male" whereas the word for the church is always feminine and throughout the New Testament, the church is pictured as an unmarried woman. More likely, this is a direct reference to Jesus Christ, the coming Messiah, who will rule eternally beginning with the Millennial rule.

The fact that He is said to "rule all the nations with a rod of iron" is an apparent reference to:

I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." (**Psalms 2:7-9**)

The expression "You shall break" is from the Hebrew word *rāa*, the root of which means "to break." However, this word is translated from Hebrew into Greek in the Septuagint with the word *poimainō*, which literally means "to shepherd" involving both the protective care and the discipline that a shepherd must exercise over the sheep. This is the same word translated in **Revelation 12:5** as "to rule." This "breaking" and "ruling" will occur when the Messiah returns to claim His kingdom at Armageddon and begins His thousand year earthly reign (ruling with a rod of iron) which is just the beginning of His eternal reign.

From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. (**Revelation 19:15**) [ESV]

**"her Child was caught up to God and to His throne."** – Given the interpretation above, this is an obvious reference to the resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

## Revelation 12:6

**<sup>6</sup>and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.**

This flight of Israel is likely referred to by our Lord when He told His disciples of the signs of the end:

"So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. (**Matthew 24:15-16**)

This flight will be triggered by the "abomination of desolation" which is when the Antichrist sets himself in the temple and demands all to worship him. Though some claim that the place to which they flee is Petra, the exact place is not mentioned in scripture. Hence, Israel flees and is protected by God during the great tribulation (the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of Daniel's seventieth week).

It is interesting to note that in Daniel chapter eleven, "the king of the north" (a likely reference to the final world ruler) will enter "the glorious land" but he will not attack the lands of Edom, Moab, and Ammon (in the mountains on the eastern side of Israel, across the Jordan river).

## Revelation 12:7, 8

**<sup>7</sup>Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, <sup>8</sup>but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven.**

This is a description of the final heavenly battle where Satan and his demons fight against Michael and his angelic forces. We are not specifically told when this battle begins though we have some clues as to when it ends. Some have speculated that it occurs as a result of the church being raptured from the earth though there is no scriptural evidence for this. It is possible that this battle begins in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (mid-trib) because of the description given in the twelfth chapter of Daniel:

At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. ... (**Daniel 12:1**) [ESV]

This description of great distress (Greek *thlipsis*, meaning "distress" or "tribulation") is the same word that our Lord used in describing the great tribulation:

For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. (**Matthew 24:21**) [ESV]

Therefore, it appears that the point in time in which Michael will arise is the middle of the tribulation (the beginning of the great tribulation) which seems to be when this battle begins.

"**no longer any place for them**" – This is an idiomatic expression meaning that they no longer existed there. This is the same expression used of the present heaven and earth when they are destroyed at the Great White Throne judgment:

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. (**Revelation 20:11**) [ESV]

Satan has been opposing God and His plan since the fall of Adam and Eve. Currently he has access into the presence of God and he is there regularly accusing faithful servants of God, a position from which he is to be thrown down:

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God."  
(**Revelation 12:10**) [ESV]

## **Revelation 12:9**

**<sup>9</sup>And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world--he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.**

**Trivia note: This verse is exactly half way through the book of Revelation.**

Some claim this to be Satan's casting down from the first or second heaven to the earth. They claim that Satan's casting out of the third heaven is spoken of in Isaiah:

How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! (**Isaiah 14:12**) [ESV]

And by Christ in:

And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." (**Luke 10:18**) [ESV]

However, Paul told us in Ephesians that we (currently) wrestle against spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (**Ephesians 6:12**) [ESV]

The words "heavenly places" come from the single Greek word *epouranios*, which literally means "the above heavens" or "the over heavens." The same word was used by Christ when he referred to His "heavenly" father:

So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you ... (**Matthew 18:35**) [ESV]

Paul also used the same word when he told the Ephesians that we currently have all spiritual blessings in the "heavenly places":

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, (**Ephesians 1:3**) [ESV]

Since Christ's Father is not just in the first or second heaven, but the third heaven, and our spiritual blessings are also in the third heaven, this word must refer to the third heaven (the above heaven or the over heaven) as used by both Paul and Christ, and we currently are wrestling with the spiritual forces in the third heaven (**Ephesians 6:12** above). Therefore,

Satan and his demons have not yet been kicked out of the third heaven (the spiritual wickedness that we wrestle with is in the “over-heaven”). This means that both **Isaiah 14:12** and **Luke 10:18** refer to future events that are spoken of as if they already happened (proleptic aorist in **Luke 10:18** and in the Septuagint version of **Isaiah 14:12**).

How you **are fallen** from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! (**Isaiah 14:12**) [ESV]

And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." (**Luke 10:18**) [ESV]

This casting of Satan and his demonic horde to the earth means that they no longer have access to the heavenly realm (the third heaven). This occurs before the fifth trumpet judgment of **Revelation 9:1** (note: the word translated “fallen” in **Rev. 9:1** is not a proleptic aorist (see notes on verse ten), rather it is in the perfect tense, implying past completed action with current continuous effect). It appears that this casting to the earth of Satan and his angels occurs in the middle of Daniel’s seventh week based on **Revelation 12:13, 14**.

“**his angels were thrown down with him**” – This is further evidence that the “stars” in verse four are, in fact, angelic beings. When these fallen angels are thrown to the earth, joined by the demons already roaming the earth, the demons spewed forth from the abyss (**Revelation 9:1-3**), and two hundred million other demons headed by the four formerly bound in the Euphrates (**Revelation 9:13-16**), there is likely to be demonic activity on this earth the likes of which has not happened since time began (hence, the woe proclaimed for the earth dwellers in verse 12).

### **Revelation 12:10**

<sup>10</sup>**And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.**

“**Now the salvation ... kingdom of our God ... have come**” – The verb translated “have come” is a proleptic aorist (a future event that is so certain that it is spoken of in the past tense).

“**our brothers**” – Since angelic beings are never referred to as brothers to those who have “overcome by the blood of the Lamb”, this collective group must be saved humans in heaven. It is likely that these include the martyrs who were revealed with the fifth seal judgment as well as those who have been martyred since then.

“**a loud voice**” – This is written in the singular, but this same voice refers to the brethren as “our” brethren. Therefore, it follows that this must be a voice of one who represents all Christians. It is most likely one of the twenty-four elders.

### **Revelation 12:11**

<sup>11</sup>**And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.**

“**they have conquered**” – This is a reference to the “brothers” in the previous verse.

Those who had been subject to Satan’s accusations have become “overcomers” ( or conquerors) as described in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation in the letters to the seven churches. Those who conquer do so by the blood of the lamb and their testimony. Some of these (many of them during the tribulation) kept their testimony even in the face of martyrdom. Here are the seven promises given to the conquerors in chapters two and three:

... To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. (**Revelation 2:7**) [ESV]

... The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death. (**Revelation 2:11**) [ESV]

... To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it. (**Revelation 2:17**) [ESV]

The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, (**Revelation 2:26**) [ESV]

The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. (**Revelation 3:5**) [ESV]

The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. (**Revelation 3:12**) [ESV]

The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. (**Revelation 3:21**) [ESV]

## **Revelation 12:12**

<sup>12</sup>**Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!**

Following the down-casting of Satan to the earth there is a proclamation of rejoicing in heaven for those who dwell there. The word translated “dwell” is a form of *skēnoō*, meaning “to pitch a tent and encamp.” There is also a proclamation of woe to the earth and the sea. Some manuscripts say “inhabitants of the earth.” The word translated “inhabitants” is a form of *katoikeō*, meaning “to dwell permanently in a fixed dwelling.” Hence, we who have been invited to heaven through the blood of the lamb will rejoice, while those who reject the blood offer and, instead choose to be permanent earth dwellers, will experience great woe.

“**in great wrath**” – Once Satan and his demonic hordes have been cast to the earth they will realize that the end is near and will be furious with God and His people! The word here translated as “wrath” is not *orgē*, the word normally translated as “wrath,” but *thumos*, implying “great passion or determination.” Once Satan and his fallen angels are cast to the earth he will be filled with great angry passion and determination to foil God’s plan.

## **Revelation 12:13, 14**

**<sup>13</sup>And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. <sup>14</sup>But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time.**

This indicates that Satan and his angels are cast to the earth at mid-trib. The word translated “**when**” is *hote*, which means “after,” or “when,” or “as soon as.” The implication is that right after Satan is cast to the earth he persecutes the woman (who, we saw in verse one, represents Israel).

“**pursued**” – This is from the Greek word *diōkō*, which means “to pursue.” Hence, Satan will go after Israel to destroy them, once and for all, so that God’s plan might be thwarted.

The woman, Israel, will be able to flee to the wilderness where God will miraculously nourish her for three and one-half years. This is the same period referred to in verse six as one thousand two hundred and sixty days. Satan will somehow be kept away from this place as the text says that the place of the woman will be “from the serpent.”

## **Revelation 12:15**

**<sup>15</sup>The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood.**

Since we know that “the serpent” is a symbolic reference to Satan we must assume that the “water” that is spewed out of his mouth is also symbolic. It is possible that this refers to literal water but it is just as likely that this represents a flood of people, perhaps an army, sent to find and destroy the Israelites.

## **Revelation 12:16**

**<sup>16</sup>But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth.**

“the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river” – Again, the earth opening its mouth is possibly symbolic. If you read **Numbers 16:28-33**, however, you find this same expression, “the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up” to consume Korah and his family and followers, meaning that the ground beneath them split apart and they fell into the opening. Hence, it is very possible that the water that Satan sends forth after the Israelites (whether it be literal water or representing a mass of people) is suddenly consumed by massive seismic activity that causes the ground to split open.

## **Revelation 12:17**

**<sup>17</sup>Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.**

Another reason to believe that the “water” in the previous verse is an army, is the fact that we see in this verse that as a result of Satan’s defeat in trying to destroy the Jews fleeing Jerusalem he now goes to war against all Jews. But, it’s not just Jews (the rest of her offspring) but also anyone who keeps the commandments of God and has the testimony of

Jesus Christ. In other words, all believers whether Jew or Gentile will be targeted by Satan through the instrumentality of the antichrist throughout the second half of Daniel's seventieth week (the great tribulation).

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