

Revelation 12 - A Woman and the Dragon

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COURSE COMMENTARY

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12:1 - a great sign

- **a great sign**
"Sign" is *semei'on* from the same root translated *signified* in [Revelation 1:1](#). The woman is a symbol to be taken figuratively. The text provides all the necessary clues to interpret what is before us.
- **a woman**
There are numerous women used figuratively within Scripture. There are four even within Revelation.
 - 1) Jezebel of Thyatira who typifies the apostate church which enters the Great Tribulation ([Rev. 2:20](#)).
 - 2) The woman before us, struggling to give birth to a male child.
 - 3) The Harlot of [Revelation 17](#).
 - 4) The bride ([Rev. 19:7](#); [21:2, 9](#); [22:17](#)).
- **not the church!**
 - 1) Christ birthed the church, not vice versa ([Mat. 16:18](#)).
 - 2) The sun/moon/stars point to Joseph's dream ([Gen. 37:9](#)).
 - 3) Sun and moon are signs of God's promises to preserve Israel ([Ps. 89:35-37](#); [Jer. 31:36](#)).
 - 4) The woman travails to birth a (singular) male child who is *caught up* and is to rule with a rod of iron. This is **Christ!**

12:1 - a woman with sun and moon

- **Eve/Israel/Mary**
The symbolism of the woman extends all the way back to the **Eve**, the curse, and the promise of a redeemer. The symbolism also points to the twelve tribes and the promises to **Israel**. The fulfillment of the birth came in the virgin birth from **Mary**.
- **clothed with the sun, moon under her feet**
"Clothed" is a word signifying *cast around, wrapped in*. The clothing (sun) provides *protection* and, with the moon, are a dual witness to God's unconditional promises to preserve Israel and David's throne ([Jer. 31:35-37](#); [33:20-23](#); [Ps. 89:35-37](#)).
- **garland of twelve stars**
A clear pointer to Joseph's dream ([Gen. 37:9](#)). The sun is *Jacob*, the moon is *Leah* (Rachel having died before the vision or its fulfillment), and the stars are the *sons*.

12:2 - she cried out in labor

- **labor pains**
The woman *produces* the child, not the other way around! The labor pains point to the first

mention of childbirth and labor ([Gen. 3:13-16](#)).

- [parallels between Genesis 3 and Revelation 12](#)
 - 1) A woman and a serpent.
 - 2) Enmity between the two.
 - 3) Conflict between her offspring and the serpent.
 - 4) Childbirth (first mention in Genesis).
 - 5) The woman will experience labor pain.

12:3 - a fiery red dragon

- [a dragon with many names](#)
 - 1) *Great dragon*: fierceness and authority.
 - 2) *Old serpent*: points back to Genesis, the Fall, and the curse.
 - 3) *Devil*: (diabolos), he "throws against" by accusation.
 - 4) *Satan*: the Hebrew equivalent of *diabolos*.
 - 5) *Deceiver*: the father of lies and deceptions, especially during the Tribulation.
- [seven heads and ten horns](#)

The *seven heads* represent seven sequential kingdoms of history ([Rev. 17:9-10](#)). The *ten horns* represent seven contemporaneous kings of the last kingdom ([Dan. 7:19-20](#)). We discuss this in more detail in the next lesson on [Revelation 13](#). (See the commentary discussion of [Beasts, Heads, and Horns](#).)

12:4 - ready to devour

- [a third of the stars of heaven](#)

Stars often signify angels ([Job 38:7](#); [Rev. 9:1](#)). Probably a reference to angels which joined him in rebellion, *his angels* ([Rev. 12:7-9](#)). Not his final casting out, but his initial rebellion ([Isa. 14:12](#); [Eze. 28:14](#)).
- [to devour her child](#)

A long history of attempts to destroy the promise of a redeemer:

 - 1) Cain's murder of Abel ([Gen. 4:8](#)).
 - 2) The pollution of the offspring of men by "sons of God" ([Gen. 6:2-4](#)).
 - 3) Pharaoh's attempt to kill all the male Hebrews ([Ex. 1:16](#)).
 - 4) Haman's attempt to wipe out the Jews ([Est. 3:6](#)).
 - 5) Ahaziah's mother's attempt to kill the royal heirs of Judah ([2Chr. 22:10](#)).
 - 6) Herod's slaughter of the babes ([Mat. 2:16](#)).
 - 7) The crucifixion of Christ.

12:5 - a rod of iron

- [rule with a rod of iron](#)

"To rule" is *poimai'nein*, meaning to herd, tend, lead to pasture. But initially His rule will be destructive--dashing the nations like the potter's vessels ([Ps. 2:9](#) cf. [Rev. 2:27](#); [19:15](#)).
- [caught up to God and His throne](#)

"Caught up" is the same root word which denotes the *snatching away* of the saints at the Rapture. Here it is passive. Jesus was "taken up" ([Acts 1:9-11](#); [Acts 3:19-21](#)).

12:6 - the woman flees

- **the woman fled**

The gap between the catching away of Christ and the flight of the woman is not indicated. The church age intervenes, but here focus returns to Israel at the time of the end. A similar compression of time is seen in Zechariah 13:7-9. The dragon persecutes the woman even **after** she gives birth. There is a spiritual basis behind **anti-Semitism!**

- **into the wilderness**

The "abomination of desolation" is the sign for her to flee (**Mat. 24:15**). She flees for 1,260 days = 3.5 years = 1/2 the 70th week of Daniel (**Dan. 9:27**).

12:6 - where she has a place

Judean Wilderness West of Jericho



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"Where she has a place" indicates a specific place in the wilderness where God will provide for her. Many passages imply it will be in the region of Edom, in what is now southern Jordan, south east of the Dead Sea (**Isa. 16:1-5; 26:20; Isa. 63:1-4; Dan. 11:41; Ps. 60:9-12; Mic. 2:12-13**).

12:6 - she is fed

- **they should feed her**

"They" implies the participation in others to provide for her, much as *ravens* and the *widow of Zarephath* were used as intermediaries to feed Elijah during a similar time (**1K. 17:2-15**). This provision may play a part in the sheep and goat judgment (**Mat. 25:31**). God will "allure her... into the wilderness" -- a passage which precedes a millennial context-- (**Hos. 2:14-20**).

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- **1,260 days**

This period is also described as "time, times, and half a time" ([Rev. 12:14](#)). This is the last half of Daniel's 70th week, a period of 3.5 years during which the Beast has authority ([Dan. 7:25](#); [Rev. 13:5](#)). A key purpose of this time of *Jacob's trouble* is to "break the power of the holy people" and cause Israel to recognize Messiah Jesus ([Dan. 12:7](#)). They will urgently seek His return ([Hos. 5:14-6:2](#); [Mat. 23:39](#)).

12:7 - war in heaven

- **Michael and his angels**

One of the "chief princes" who is specifically associated with the defense of the Jews ([Dan. 10:13, 21](#)). Not only does he defeat Satan during this future time of trouble, he also "stands up" to defend Israel ([Dan. 12:1](#)).

12:8-9 - Satan cast out

- **cast out**

Satan and his angels no longer had access to God to accuse and slander. This is the first stage in the *de facto* fulfillment of what was accomplished *de jure* at Christ's first coming. Two more stages remain: he is bound in the abyss at the start of the Millennial Kingdom ([Rev. 20:1-3](#)) and eventually cast into the Lake of Fire after one final rebellion ([Rev. 20:10](#)).

- **who deceives the whole world**

His first target for deception was Eve ([Gen. 3:4-5](#) cf. [1Ti. 2:14](#)). His ultimate deception will involve the false prophet whose great signs will deceive the earth dwellers ([Rev. 13:13-14](#)). The deluding power that will come at the time of the end is irresistible except by those kept by God's power ([2Th. 2:9-12](#)).

12:10-11 - Satan overcome

- **the accuser of the brethren**

Previously, Satan had been incessant in his accusations against God's elect ([Job 1:6-12](#); [Zec. 3:1-5](#); [Luke 22:31](#)).

- **they overcame him**

They overcome Satan by steadfastly relying upon God's work of *redemption* (the blood) and the promise of eternal life (maintaining their testimony to the point of death).

12:12 - woe to the earth

- **woe to the inhabitants of the earth and sea**

This woe is for the *earth dwellers* and contributes to their time of testing ([Rev. 3:10](#)). This is their *double woe*, for they will experience Satan's great wrath combined with the final woe of the last trumpet!

12:13-14 - wings of a great eagle

- **two wings of a great eagle**

This speaks of God's supernatural assistance during her flight. It recalls His deliverance of Israel

from Egypt by the parting of the Red Sea ([Ex. 19:4](#)).

- [to her place](#)

This is the place she has which was prepared by God ([Rev. 12:6](#)). Probably in southern Jordan east of the Dead Sea. She is protected from the presence (*face*) of the serpent. He cannot access her and may not even have knowledge of her precise location.

12:15-16 - the earth helped

- [the dragon spewed water... like a flood](#)

Probably denotes an overwhelming military force. May be the continuation of the Beast's invasion of the *glorious land* which led to the installation of the abomination and her flight ([Dan. 11:41](#)).

- [the earth helped the woman](#)

Probably supernatural assistance similar to how Gog is overthrown ([Eze. 38:22](#)). The reference to swallowing may point to the way in which Korah's family was literally swallowed by the earth ([Num. 16:33](#)).

12:17 - the rest of her offspring

- [the rest of her offspring](#)

Other Jews who are not in the wilderness:

- 1) Jews protected by God's seal (the 144,000 of [Rev. 7](#) and [14](#)). Probably occupied with worldwide evangelism.
- 2) Jews in the diaspora who come to faith, but who were unable to reach the wilderness.
- 3) Jews in the diaspora who take the mark of the beast ([Rev. 13:15-16](#) cf. [John 5:43](#)).

- [who keep the commandments of God](#)

Unbelieving Jews are not the dragon's primary target at the time of the end, but *believing Jews* who are now trusting in their crucified Messiah. This includes the 144,000 sealed of Israel who are said to "follow the Lamb wherever He goes" ([Rev. 14:4](#)).

For additional information on this topic, see the [commentary](#).