

Revelation 12

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

The Woman, Israel

12:1 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;

I. Context

- A. The seven trumpet are sounded - and the church warns the world that Jesus would return and claim His kingdom with judgement and rewards for all mankind.
- B. John now sees a woman that is wrapped in the sun, standing on the moon, and wearing a crown of twelve stars.
 1. This could be either one of two things:
 - a) The Jewish nation - The first bride of Christ (although divorced), which could be said to be the “mother” of Jesus because He was born Jewish.
 - b) The Christian Church (more likely because of the previous chapter — it flows better to continue with Christ’s Kingdom on earth, rather than returning to tell the Gospel story over) - which becomes the vehicle that reveals God to the world (or gives birth to Him).
 - (1) She is wrapped in the Sun (the light of Christ)
 - (2) She stands on the moon (reflecting His light to the world)
 - (3) She has a crown of twelve stars (guided by the Apostles teachings / the church).

II. Notes

- A. Psalm 104:2 - He wraps Himself in light as with a garment; He stretches out the heavens like a tent,
- B. Song of Solomon 6:10 - Who is this who shines like the dawn, as fair as the moon, as bright as the sun, as majestic as the stars in procession?
- C. Matthew 24:30 - At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.
- D. Galatians 4:26 - But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.
- E. All the lights of heaven are brought together here for a description which cannot fail to remind us of the picture of the Shulamite in the Canticles ([Song of Solomon 6:10](#)): “Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners (or, [the heavenly host](#))?” - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)
- F. Bishop Newton explains this, and the five following verses, as follows: “St. John resumes his subject from the beginning, and represents the church ([Revelation 12:1-2](#)) as a woman, and a mother bearing children unto Christ. She is [clothed with the sun](#), invested with the rays of Jesus Christ, the Sun of righteousness; having [the moon](#) — The Jewish new moons and festivals, as well as all sublunary things; [under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars](#) — An emblem of her being under the light and guidance of the twelve apostles. [And she, being with child, cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered](#) — St. Paul hath made use of the same metaphor, and applied it to his preaching and propagating of the gospel, in the midst of tribulation and persecution, [Galatians 4:19](#). But the words of St. John are much stronger, and more emphatically express the pangs and struggles which the church endured from the first publication of the gospel to the time of Constantine the Great, when she was in some measure eased of her pains, and brought forth a deliverer. - [Benson Commentary](#)
- G. woman clothed with the sun ... moon under her feet—the Church, Israel first, and then the Gentile Church; clothed with Christ, "the Sun of righteousness." "Fair as the moon, clear as the sun." - [Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary](#)

H. a woman: by whom is meant, not the virgin Mary, as highly favoured of God, and big with her firstborn son Jesus; though there may be an allusion to her, and in some things there is a likeness, as is by some observed; as Mary brought forth Christ corporeally, and God in the fulness of time sent forth his Son, made of a woman, so this woman brings forth Christ spiritually, or the manly birth of his kingdom in the world, or one that should be the instrument of enlarging his kingdom; - [Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible](#)

12:2 and she was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth.

I. Context

- A. The Church is pictured as a beautiful woman that shines with God's glory, reflected to the world (like the moon) and surrendered by the witness of the Apostles.
- B. The church reveals Christ to the world - in the same way a woman gives birth.
 - 1. The church feels the "labor pains" of persecution.

II. Notes

- A. [Isaiah 26:17 - As a woman with child and about to give birth writhes and cries out in pain, that is how we were in Your presence, O LORD.](#)
- B. [Matthew 24:8 - All these are the beginning of birth pains.](#)
- C. There is an anguish of the Church which Christ laid upon her; it is the law of her life that she must bring forth Christ to the world; it is not simply that she must encounter pain, but that she cannot work deliverance without knowing suffering. - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)
- D. not with Christ considered personally, who was long before brought forth by the virgin Mary, but with the truth, and gospel of Christ, or with Christ mystical. - [Matthew Poole's Commentary](#)

The Red Dragon, Satan

12:3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems.

I. Context

- A. The Church presents Jesus to the world through persecution - much as a woman brings a baby to light through labor pains.
- B. As the church is speaking to the world, Satan also steps forward.
 - 1. He is represented as a dragon
 - a) Dragon = the serpent of Genesis fully grown = Satan.
 - b) Red = The color of destruction and death = a color meant to intimidate and frighten
 - c) Seven heads / 10 horns / seven crowns = the totality of all people and organizations that attempted to stop the Christian Church.
 - (1) 7= the number of completes (Spiritually) / 10 = the number of completeness (worldly)
 - (a) 7 heads = all the people who try to stop the Church
 - (b) 10 horns = all the authorities (powers/ organizations) that try to stop the Church
 - (c) 7 crowns = all the governments that try to stop the Church
 - i) NOTE: By using 7 and 10, this symbolized that this opposition came from BOTH inside and outside the Church.

II. Notes

- A. [Isaiah 27:1 - In that day the LORD will take His sharp, great, and mighty sword, and bring judgment on Leviathan, the fleeing serpent--Leviathan, the coiling serpent--and He will slay the dragon of the sea.](#)
- B. [Daniel 7:7 - After this, as I watched in my vision in the night, suddenly a fourth beast appeared, and it was terrifying--dreadful and extremely strong--with large iron teeth. It](#)

devoured and crushed; then it trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the beasts before it, and it had ten horns.

- C. Daniel 7:20 - I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell--the horn whose appearance was more imposing than the others, with eyes and with a mouth that spoke words of arrogance.
- D. This, too, is a sign, and has a meaning. The dragon stands for some dread and hostile power. "The dragon is that fabulous monster of whom ancient poets told, as large in size, coiled like a snake, blood red in colour . . . insatiable in voracity, and ever athirst for human blood"—a fit emblem of him whom our Lord declared to be a murderer from the beginning; for the dragon is intended here to describe him who, in [Revelation 12:9](#), is also said to be that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan. The red colour is the colour of flame and blood, and the symbol of destruction and slaughter. The dragon is the emblem of the evil spirit, the devil, the perpetual antagonist of good, the persecutor of the Church in all ages (comp. [Psalm 74:13](#)): just as the dragon is sometimes employed to represent the Egyptian power, the ancient foe of Israel ([Isaiah 51:9](#); [Ezekiel 29:3](#)). - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)
- E. The whole description should be compared with the account given of the beast in [Revelation 17:3](#); [Revelation 17:7](#); [Revelation 17:10](#); [Revelation 17:12](#). There the seven heads are explained as seven kings, and the heads here are crowned; the ten horns are also explained as ten kings. The sevenfold kingship and the tenfold power of the world are thus described as belonging to the dragon. The picture here, as the picture of the wild beast in Revelation 17, represents, as concentrated into a single hostile form, all the varying forces and successive empires which have opposed or oppressed the people of God, and sought to destroy their efforts for good: for all evil has its root in a spirit at enmity with God. Hence the dragon appears armed with all the insignia of those sovereignties and powers which have been animated by this spirit. - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)
- F. The seven heads would somehow denote power, or seats of power. Such a number of heads increase the terribleness, and, as it were, the vitality of the monster. What is here represented would be as terrible and formidable as such a monster; or such a monster would appropriately represent what was designed to be symbolized here. The number seven may be used here "as a perfect number," or merely to heighten the terror of the image; but it is more natural to suppose that there would be something in what is here represented which would lay the foundation for the use of this number. There would be something either in the origin of the power; or in the union of various powers now combined in the one represented by the dragon; - [Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)
- G. And ten horns - Emblems of power, denoting that, in some respects, there were ten powers combined in this one. See the notes on [Daniel 7:7-8](#), [Daniel 7:20](#), [Daniel 7:24](#). There can be little doubt that John had those passages of Daniel in his eye, and perhaps as little that the reference is to the same thing. The meaning is, that, in some respects, there would be a tenfold origin or division of the power represented by the dragon - [Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)
- H. And seven crowns upon his heads - Greek, "diadems." See the notes on [Revelation 9:7](#). There is a reference here to some kingly power, and doubtless John had some kingdom or sovereignty in his eye that would be properly symbolized in this manner. - [Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)
- I. the color of the dragon implies his fiery rage as a murderer from the beginning. - [Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary](#)
- J. In Da 7:4-7 the Antichristian powers up to Christ's second coming are represented by four beasts, which have among them seven heads, that is, the first, second, and fourth beasts having one head each, the third, four heads. His universal dominion as prince of this fallen world is implied by the seven diadems (contrast the "many diadems on Christ's head," Re 19:12, when coming to destroy him and his), the caricature of the seven Spirits of God. His worldly instruments of power are marked by the ten horns, ten

being the number of the world. It marks his self-contradictions that he and the beast bear both the number seven (the divine number) and ten (the world number). - [Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary](#)

12:4 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.

I. Context

- A. The Church is presenting Jesus through tribulation (like a woman in birth pains) while it is being opposed by people, powers, and governments (controlled by Satan - the dragon).
- B. Satan attacked
 - 1. and swept away 1/3 of the stars
 - a) Some believe this means that Satan corrupted 1/3 of the angels to make his demons.
 - b) More likely it means that through the persecution of the church about 1/3 of the leaders would be killed.
 - (1) and Satan stood eagerly by to destroy the message of Christ as it was produced by the church.

II. Notes

- A. Daniel 8:10 - [It grew as high as the host of heaven, and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the earth, and trampled them.](#)
- B. Matthew 2:16 - [When Herod saw that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was filled with rage. Sending orders, he put to death all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, according to the time he had learned from the Magi.](#)
- C. His dragging down the stars with his tail (lashed back and forward in his fury) implies his persuading to apostatize, like himself, and to become earthly, those angels and also once eminent human teachers who had formerly been heavenly (compare Re 12:1; 1:20; Isa 14:12). - [Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary](#)
- D. The [tail of the red dragon](#) signifies his followers, his civil and military officers, whosoever were by him employed to execute his commands. By [the stars](#), here, are either meant the ministers of the Christian church, or the professors of it. - [Matthew Poole's Commentary](#)
- E. He is resembled by a dragon, [Psalm 74:13,14 Isa 51:9 Ezekiel 29:3](#), and watched upon God's ancient church to destroy it, as the pagan emperors did upon the Christian church. - [Matthew Poole's Commentary](#)
- F. Of the stars of heaven - Some expositors find an allusion to the fallen angels - [Vincent's Word Studies](#)

The Male Child, Christ

12:5 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.

I. Context

- A. The church presents Jesus through its persecutions, as a woman presents a baby through her labor pains. Satan (using people, powers, and governments) is attempting to stop the Church.
- B. The church produces Jesus as King of Kings and He gains strength that Satan could not hinder because He holds the authority of God.

II. Notes

- A. Psalm 2:9 - [You will break them an iron scepter; You will shatter them like pottery.](#)
- B. Isaiah 66:7 - [Before she was in labor, she gave birth; before she was in pain, she delivered a boy.](#)

- C. 2 Corinthians 12:2 - I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of it I do not know, but God knows
- D. Revelation 2:27 - He will rule them with an iron scepter and shatter them like pottery-- just as I have received authority from My Father.
- E. There can be no doubt that this man child is Christ. The combination of features is too distinct to admit of doubt, it is the one who will feed His flock like a shepherd ([Isaiah 40:12](#)), who is to have, not His own people, but all nations as His inheritance ([Psalm 2:7-9](#)), and whose rule over them is to be supreme and irresistible. But the fact that this child is Christ must not cause us to limit the meaning of the vision to the efforts of the evil one to destroy the infant Jesus; for it is also the Christ in the Church which the wicked one hates: and wherever Christ dwells in any heart by faith, and wherever the preachers of the gospel in earnest travail for their Master, seek to lift up Christ, there will the foe be found, like the fowls of the air, ready to carry away the good seed - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)
- F. The efforts of the evil one to destroy are thwarted; the child is snatched away and placed out of the range of the dragon's power. - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)
- G. Not Christ, literally and personally considered, or Christ in his human nature, as made of a woman, and born of a virgin, which was a fact that had been years ago; but Christ mystically, or Christ in his members, who are called by his name, because he is formed in them, and they are the seed of the woman, the church; - [Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible](#)

12:6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she *had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

- I. Context
 - A. The Church presents Jesus to the world. Satan attempts to destroy this connection, but Jesus is stronger than Satan.
 - B. God would look after the church, even though it is persecuted.
 - 1. It is compared to Israelites wandering in the desert for 40 years.
- II. Notes
 - A. Daniel 12:12 - Blessed is he who waits and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.
 - B. Revelation 11:2 - But exclude the courtyard outside the temple. Do not measure it, because it has been given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for 42 months.
 - C. Revelation 11:3 - And I will empower my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth."
 - D. Revelation 12:14 - But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle to fly from the presence of the serpent to her place in the wilderness, where she was nourished for a time, and times, and half a time.
 - E. Revelation 13:5 - The beast was given a mouth to speak arrogant and blasphemous words, and authority to act for 42 months.
 - F. The flight of the woman into the wilderness, and her fortunes there, are more fully described in [Revelation 12:13](#). This verse simply tells us that the woman fled; we read afterwards that it was persecution which drove her into the wilderness. - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)
 - G. The woman, the representative of the Church, has a place prepared by God for her in the wilderness; she is not altogether uncared for; she has a place prepared, and nourishment - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)
 - H. The time of the sojourn in the wilderness is twelve hundred and sixty days, a period corresponding in length to the forty-two months during which the witnesses prophesied; it is the period of the Church's witness against predominant evil. Driven

forth, her voice, though but as the voice of one crying in the wilderness, is lifted up on behalf of righteousness and truth. - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)

- I. On the meaning of the word "wilderness" in the New Testament, see the notes on [Matthew 3:1](#). It means a desert place, a place where there are few or no inhabitants; a place, therefore, where one might be concealed and unknown - remote from the habitations and the observations of people. This would well represent the fact, that the true church became for a time obscure and unknown - as if it had fled away from the habitations of people, and had retired to the solitude and loneliness of a desert - [Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)
- J. The meaning is, that during that time the true church, though obscure and almost unknown, would be the object of the divine protection and care - [Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)
- K. as the Israelites, when they fled from Pharaoh, went into the wilderness; and Joseph, watched upon by Herod, fled into Egypt; so the church did hide herself during the antichristian persecutions, every one shifting for themselves as well as they could. - [Matthew Poole's Commentary](#)

[The Angel, Michael](#)

12:7 And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war,

- I. Context
 - A. The Church presents Jesus through persecution from Satan, but God protects it.
 - B. As the Church battles on earth, a Spiritual battle is fought in Heaven.
 - 1. This is the battle between the ultimate Good and the Ultimate Evil.
 - a) Satan - the Dragon - represents everything that opposes God —
 - (1) He is the Ultimate Evil.
 - (2) His name means "the adversary" - He opposes God's work.
 - (a) Anyone that hinder's the work of God is under Satan's authority - or a "satan" (such as when Jesus called Peter "satan" - Matthew 16:23)
 - b) Michael is the opposite of Satan
 - (1) He is the Ultimate Good
 - (2) His name means "Who is like unto God" - He aides God's work
 - (a) anything that fights for God could be said to be under Michael's authority - or a "Michael".
 - 2. Thus, In heaven all the forces of good (Michael and his angels) are battling the forces of evil (Satan and his angels) for the life the church.
 - a) This could be a literal battle or a symbolic battle - either way, the fate of the church was at stake because it was being challenged.

II. Notes

- A. Daniel 10:13 - [However, the prince of the kingdom of Persia opposed me for twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.](#)
- B. Daniel 10:21 - [But first I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth. Yet no one has the courage to support me against these, except Michael, your prince.](#)
- C. Daniel 12:1 - [At that time Michael, the great prince who stands watch over your people, will rise up. There will be a time of distress such as never has occurred from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people--everyone whose name is found written in the book--will be delivered.](#)
- D. Jude 1:9 - [But even the archangel Michael, when he disputed with the devil over the body of Moses, did not presume to bring a slanderous judgment against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"](#)

- E. In Jewish writings, Michael is called “the advocate” (*sunegor*), and stands in opposition to the accuser (*kategor*); - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)
- F. This is one of those passages which has ever been regarded as more or less perplexing. It has afforded material for many poetic fancies, and has been the occasion of much speculative interpretation. We shall fail to catch the spirit of its meaning if we insist upon detaching the passage from its context; and the more so that the structure of the chapter seems to give an express warning against doing so. - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)
- G. There is mystery—unexplained mystery, perhaps—about this war in heaven, but there need be none about the general occasion referred to; it is the overthrow of the evil one by Christ: the death-blow given by the Lord of Life to him who had the power of death; - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)
- H. Some, indeed, think that this Michael is a designation of our Lord Himself, and of Him alone; but a consideration of the other passages in which Michael is mentioned (notably, [Daniel 10:13](#), where Michael is called “one of the chief princes”) leaves this limited meaning doubtful, and almost suggests conflict among the spiritual hierarchies. - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)
- I. It may, however, be the case that the name **Michael**—the meaning of which is, “who is like unto God”—is a general name applied to any who for the moment represent the cause of God in the great conflict against evil. It may thus belong, not to any one angel being, but be a kind of type-name used for the champion and prince of God’s people, and so employed in this passage to denote Him who is the Captain of our salvation. - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)
- J. It might reasonably be presumed that all the powers of idolatry would be strenuously exerted against the establishment of Christianity, and especially against the establishment of a Christian on the imperial throne: and these struggles and contentions between the heathen and the Christian religions are here represented by **war in heaven**, between the angels of darkness and angels of light. - [Benson Commentary](#)
- K. Michael was ([Daniel 10:21](#); [Daniel 12:1](#)) the tutelar angel and protector of the Jewish Church. He performs here the same office for the Christian Church. He and the good angels, who are **sent forth** ([Hebrews 1:14](#)) to **minister to the heirs of salvation**, were the invisible agents on one side, as the devil and his evil agents were on the other. - [Benson Commentary](#)

12:8 and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.

- I. context
 - A. As the church was facing persecution on Earth - there was a battle between good (Michael’s army) and Evil (Satan’s army) in Heaven for the church.
 - 1. This may have been a symbolic or literal war, but the idea was that the church was physically attacked, and Spiritually attacked. Its very existence was at stake.
 - B. Good eventually wins - the Spiritual battle for the church is won and everything that opposed the world of God were destroyed in the Spiritual realm.
- II. Notes
 - A. The result of the war was the dragon’s defeat. The whole power of the evil hosts failed them. There is an inherent weakness in evil: a spot which may be touched whereupon all its vaunted strength withers. So complete was the overthrow, that even their place knew them no more. “I went by, and, lo! he was gone; I sought him, but he could nowhere be found.” - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)
 - B. They were cast out, and were seen there no more. The idea is, that they were defeated and driven away, though for a time they were suffered to carry on the warfare elsewhere. - [Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)

12:9 And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

I. Context

- A. The church is persecuted on earth. This also means that there is a Spiritual battle between all that oppose God (Satan/ Dragon) and all that aide God (Michael). The good side wins and Satan's influence is removed from Heaven.
- B. The adversary (Satan/ Devil/ Serpent/ Dragon) has opposed God's will, but could never overpower Him, so He now focuses on the people in the Church.
 1. The battle is over and complete in Heaven - but we are still fighting it here on earth.
- C. A side note - the rebellion in Heaven was most likely through the Old Testament, as Satan accused and harassed mankind before God (such as in the book of Job). It probably ended with the Cross - God's final word on the matter. Satan could not argue the cross, so he now challenges those that serve God here on Earth.

II. Notes

- A. Genesis 3:1 - Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field that the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat of any tree in the garden?'"
- B. Job 1:9 - Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing?"
- C. Matthew 4:10 - "Away from me, Satan!" Jesus declared. "For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'"
- D. Matthew 25:41 - Then He will say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'
- E. Luke 10:18 - So He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."
- F. John 12:31 - Now judgment is upon this world; now the prince of this world will be cast out.
- G. 2 Corinthians 11:3 - I am afraid, however, that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may be led astray from your simple and pure devotion to Christ.
- H. Thus the victory of Christ is marked by the overthrow of the great adversary. The stronger than the strong one has come, and taken away his armour ([Luke 11:21-22](#)). The death-blow is given. The prince of this world (who found nothing in Christ) is judged ([John 16:11](#)). The adversary is described as the dragon, the fierce and cruel foe who is ever ready to devour ([1 Peter 5:8](#)). **The ancient serpent.** The serpent was used as an emblem of the evil principle. (Comp. [Genesis 3:1](#)). But the head of the ancient foe of man is now bruised: he is the devil, the accuser and calumniator. He is called the accuser of the brethren in the next verse; he is Satan, the adversary, and he is the seducer, the deceiver, as he is a liar, and the father of it ([John 8:44](#)). - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)

- I. That there may be an allusion in the language here to what actually occurred in some far distant period of the past, when Satan was ejected from heaven, there can be no reason to doubt. Our Saviour seems to refer to such an event in the language which he uses when he says [Luke 10:18](#), "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven"; and Jude, perhaps [Revelation 12:6](#), may refer to the same event. All that we know on the subject leads us to suppose that at some time there was a revolt among the angels, and that the rebellious part were cast out of heaven, for an allusion to this is not infrequent in the Scriptures. Still the event here referred to is a symbolical representation of what could occur at a later period, when the church would be about to spread and he triumphant, and when Satan would wage a deadly war against it. That opposition would be as if he made war on Michael the archangel, and the heavenly

hosts, and his failure would be as great as if he were vanquished and cast out of heaven. - [Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)

- J. That old serpent - This doubtless refers to the serpent that deceived Eve ([Genesis 3:1-11](#); [Revelation 20:2](#); compare the notes on [2 Corinthians 11:3](#)); and this passage may be adduced as a proof that the real tempter of Eve was the devil, who assumed the form of a serpent. The word "old" here refers to the fact that his appearance on earth was at an early stage of the world's history, and that he had long been employed in the work which is here attributed to him - that of opposing the church. - [Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)
- K. Called the devil - To whom the name devil is given. That is, this is the same being that is elsewhere and commonly known by that name. See the notes on [Matthew 4:1](#). - [Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)
- L. And Satan - Another name given to the same being - a name, like the other, designed to refer to something in his character. See it explained in the notes on [Job 1:6](#). - [Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)
- M. Which deceiveth the whole world - Whose character is that of a deceiver; whose agency extends over all the earth. See the [John 8:44](#) note, and [1 John 5:19](#) note. - [Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)
- N. He was cast out into the earth - That is, he was not suffered to pursue his designs in heaven, but was cast down to the earth, where he is permitted for a time to carry on his warfare against the church. According to the interpretation proposed above, this refers to the period when there were indications that God was about to set up his kingdom on the earth. The language, however, is such as would be used on the supposition that there had been, at some period, a rebellion in heaven, and that Satan and his followers had been cast out to return there no more. It is difficult to explain this language except on that supposition; and such a supposition is, in itself, no more improbable than the apostasy and rebellion of man. - [Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)
- O. And his angels were cast out with him - They shared the lot of their leader. As applicable to the state of things to which this refers, the meaning is, that all were overthrown; that no enemy of the church would remain unsubdued; that the victory would be final and complete. - [Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)

12:10 Then 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 brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.

- I. Context
 - A. While the church is persecuted on Earth, Satan fought with God in Heaven - and lost because of Michael and His army. Satan was shut out of Heaven and could not sway God, so He began fighting the church itself.
 - B. Satan, who had been trying to condemn mankind by accusing them before God, has been silenced.
 - 1. The angels rejoice over this because their “brothers” (mankind) has been found worthy of saving.
- II. Notes
 - A. Zechariah 3:1 - [Then the angel showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD](#), with Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.
 - B. Luke 22:31 - Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat.
 - C. 1 Peter 5:8 - Be sober-minded and alert. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.
 - D. The words of this doxology are like an echo of the close of the Lord's Prayer. The prayer “Thy kingdom come” seems answered. Now is come the kingdom. - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)

- E. The accuser of the brethren is cast down. This is another reason for joy and another feature of the salvation. The habit of the accuser is expressed by the use of the present tense. We should read not “who accused,” but “who **accuseth.**” Night and day he accused. (Comp. [Zechariah 3:1](#), and [Job 1:9; Job 2:5.](#)) - **Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers**
- F. the holy angels call the saints **brethren.** - **Matthew Poole's Commentary**

12:11 And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.

- I. Context
 - A. Michael and the forces of Good rejoice because Satan and the forces of evil are unable to defeat God’s plan for mankind and His Church.
 - B. The reason for this victory was the cross
 - 1. When Jesus gave His life for mankind, all Satan’s accusations meant nothing. He had no weapon to fight against mankind.
 - 2. The forces of good stood their ground with the truth of Christ
 - 3. They were willing to sacrifice even their own existence rather than deny the truth - and this broke through the lies of Satan.
- II. Notes
 - A. Luke 14:26 - "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be My disciple.
 - B. John 16:33 - I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take courage; I have overcome the world!"
 - C. I John 2:13 - I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father.
 - D. They overcame him—**i.e.**, the accuser, the devil: their victory over him is “owing to” the blood of the Lamb. Who is he that condemneth, when Christ hath died? What power can the accusations of the adversary have when the Lamb of God hath taken away the sin of the world ([John 1:29](#)), and when we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus? ([Hebrews 10:19.](#)) - **Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers**
 - E. for Christ’s blood was both the meritorious and exemplary cause of their victory - **Matthew Poole's Commentary**
 - F. by the use they made of the Scriptures of truth, the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, to which they bore a faithful testimony, and to which they adhered, and by so doing gained the victory over Satan - **Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible**

12:12 For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has *only* a short time.”

- I. Context
 - A. Heaven rejoices because Satan has failed in His attempts to destroy mankind through His accusations before God. The cross was God’s final word and salvation was assured.
 - B. We can rejoice because Jesus made our salvation secure in Heaven, but we must still be weary, because we are still fighting for our soul here on earth.
 - 1. God has assured us that we have salvation if we want it - but we have to take it and Satan will try to keep us from taking it.
- II. Notes
 - A. Psalm 96:11 - **Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice; let the sea resound, and all that fills it.**

- B. Isaiah 44:23 - Sing for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done this; shout aloud, O depths of the earth. Break out into singing, O mountains, you forests and all your trees. For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and revealed His glory in Israel.
- C. It is not unusual in the Scriptures to call on the heavens and the earth to sympathize with the events that occur. Compare the notes on [Isaiah 1:2](#). Here the heavens are called on to rejoice because of the signal victory which it was seen would be achieved over the great enemy. Heaven itself was secure from any further rebellion or invasion, and the foundation was laid for a final victory over Satan everywhere. - [Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)

12:13 And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child.

- I. Context
 - A. At the cross, God gave His final word about mankind - "He is worth saving". This meant that Satan's attacks and accusations against mankind were no longer effective and He was removed from Heaven.
 - B. Since Satan could not destroy God's love for mankind, He attacks God's churches.
 - 1. This is an institutional attack (persecution) to stop the growth of the church.
- II. Notes
 - A. When the dragon was thus deposed from the imperial throne, and [cast unto the earth](#), ([Revelation 12:13](#).) he still continued to persecute the church with equal malice, though not with equal power. - [Benson Commentary](#)
 - B. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth - That is, when Satan saw that he was doomed to discomfiture and overthrow, as if he had been cast out of heaven; when he saw that his efforts must be confined to the earth, and that only for a limited time, he "persecuted the woman," and was more violently enraged against the church on earth. - [Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)
 - C. The child is represented as safe; that is, the ultimate progress and extension of the church was certain. But Satan was permitted still to wage a warfare against the church - represented here by his wrath against the woman, and by her being constrained to flee into the wilderness. - [Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)
 - D. The devil, defeated in his attempts against God in heaven, and foiled in his attack upon the man child - Christ Jesus (see ver. 5), now directs his efforts against the woman - the Church. The interpretation must not be confined to one peculiar form of evil which assails the Church, but must include all - the bodily persecutions with which those to whom St. John wrote were afflicted, the heresies which arose in the Church, the lukewarmness of her members ([Revelation 3:16](#)), and all others - [Pulpit Commentary](#)

12:14 But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.

- I. Context
 - A. Because Satan no longer had influence in Heaven, He began to attack the Church to try and destroy mankind's access to God.
 - B. The church is persecuted and oppressed (a time and times and half a time) by Satan's agents.
 - 1. However, God sustains and encourages the church (on eagle's wings), while protecting it (place prepared in the wilderness).
 - 2. This shows how the Church is similar to the Israel nation that was led into the wilderness and protected by God for forty years
 - a) God used a time of trial to build Israel into His people.
 - b) He is using a time of persecution to do the same for the Church.
 - (1) They become strong because of the things they have to endure.

II. Notes

- A. Exodus 19:4 - You have seen for yourselves what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself.
- B. Deuteronomy 32:11 - As an eagle stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, He spread His wings to catch them; He carried them on His pinions.
- C. Isaiah 40:31 - But those who wait upon the LORD will renew their strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not faint.
- D. Daniel 7:25 - He will speak out against the Most High and oppress the saints of the Most High, intending to change the set times and laws, and the saints will be given into his hand for a time, and times, and half a time.
- E. Daniel 8:14 - He said to me, "It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be properly restored."
- F. Daniel 12:7 - And the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by Him who lives forever, saying, "It will be for a time, times, and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been shattered, all these things will be completed."
- G. The woman is persecuted and driven into the wilderness: yet it is with the eagle wings given her by her Lord that she flies; the serpent drives her into the wilderness: yet it is in the wilderness that her place is prepared by God. The way that seems hard is the way that is most blest. The opposition of the dragon brings her blessings that she never would have received except in persecution; neither the eagle power nor the heavenly sustenance had been hers without the serpent's hate. Thus is the trial of faith precious in bringing us to know the priceless blessings of heavenly help and heavenly food. She is given eagle's wings. God had spoken of the deliverance of Israel under a similar emblem, "Ye have seen . . . how I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you unto myself" ([Exodus 19:4](#); comp. [Deuteronomy 32:10-12](#)). There is a difference as well as a resemblance in the emblem here. In Exodus God is said to have borne Israel on eagles' wings: here the wings are given to the woman. The strength of the earlier dispensation is a strength often used for, rather than in, the people of God; the strength of the latter is a strength in them: "They mount up with wings as eagles" ([Isaiah 40:31](#)). - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)

12:15 And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood.

I. Context

- A. Satan cannot keep God from His people, so he tries to keep people from God by destroying the Church, but the church grows stronger through persecution.
- B. Satan, the serpent who deceived Eve, tries to overwhelm the church
 - 1. lies, heresies, and other ideas that challenge the simplicity of the Gospel (such as the Nicolaitans - Rev. 2) that shook the foundations of the church.
 - a) This not only caused instability within the church, but put a wall in front of those that were new believers or who were seeking God.

II. Notes

- A. Genesis 3:1 - Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field that the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat of any tree in the garden?'"
- B. 2 Corinthians 11:3 - I am afraid, however, that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may be led astray from your simple and pure devotion to Christ.
- C. The foe of the woman was described as a dragon for his cruelty and fierceness—as a serpent for his subtlety. - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)

- D. The first attack on the woman is pictured as persecution by the dragon: from this she escapes by flight; but the subtlety of the enemy finds another device: the foe (now described as a serpent) pours forth water as a river to sweep away the woman. The emblem is not uncommon in the Bible. Invasion is described as “an overflowing flood” ([Jeremiah 46:7-8](#); [Jeremiah 47:2](#); comp. [Isaiah 8:7-8](#)) The same emblem is used in [Psalm 74:2-6](#) to describe the uprising of a people’s ill-will. The floods, the rivers, the waves of the sea, are employed to express popular movements. The woman that cannot be destroyed by positive persecution may be swept away by a hostile public opinion. It is not the rulers alone who stand up against the Lord and His Church: an infuriated populace may be stirred up against them. - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)

E.

12:16 But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth.

I. Context

- A. Since Satan could not keep God away from mankind, he attacked the church to stop mankind from finding God. He overwhelmed the church with ideas to confuse the truth and keep people from finding Jesus.
- B. Taking the symbols from the creation story ([Genesis 1](#)) - we see the flood of chaos hits the church, but where the Spirit of God hovers, there is peace and dry ground forms.
 - 1. Under the chaos, is a solid truth that overcomes the overwhelming chaos.
 - a) When the Church embraces that truth, the flood cannot overwhelm them.

II. Notes

- A. By the flood or river we understand all great popular movements against Christianity: the earth swallows up these; they diffuse themselves for a time, but mother earth absorbs them all, for the earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof, and no movement hostile to truth can permanently succeed: the eternal laws of truth and right are ultimately found stronger than all the half truths, whole falsehoods, and selfishness which give force to such movements. - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)

17 So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

I. Context

- A. Since Satan cannot stop God from saving mankind, he attempts to stop men from finding God - he attacks the church with an overwhelming amount of “religious” ideas (good and bad) to confuse and frustrate believers. But the church holds tight to the simple truths of Jesus and overcomes this attack.
- B. Since Satan could not destroy the church, he turns his attacks on individual Christians.
 - 1. If he can separate the person from the church, he could keep them from God.

II. Notes

- A. [Genesis 3:15](#) - And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”
- B. [I John 2:3](#) - By this we can be sure that we have come to know Him: if we keep His commandments.
- C. [I John 5:10](#) - Whoever believes in the Son of God has this testimony within him; whoever does not believe God has made Him out to be a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony God has given about His Son.
- D. But the foe will not give up his attacks. He can make war upon individual Christians; he may cease to assail the collective Church of Christ, but he can assail Christians by a thousand discomforts, by petty opposition, by undermining their morals, by making them unpopular, not as Christians, but as “very particular” Christians: for those thus

assailed are they who "keep the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus." It is the old combination of a holy life and a fidelity to their Master which is the test of true loyalty. - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)

- E. "The church, as such, he could not destroy; therefore he turned his wrath against individual Christians, to bring as many of them as possible to death" (DeWette). - [Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)