

## Revelation 12 – The Defeat of the Dragon

NOTE: Visionary sequence does not necessarily denote chronological sequence.  
Chapters 12-15:4 are a series of visions between the trumpet and bowl judgments.

Prophetic Recapitulation – A summary or restating of an event  
(Application of Ch. 12 is same for us as the original recipients – the protection of God's people from Satan by Christ's atoning work.

### I. The Two Signs in Heaven (1-4a)

#### A. The Sign of The Woman In Heaven (1-2)

##### 1. A Woman is Seen in Heaven (1)

- a. The Woman is Clothed with the Sun, has the Moon Under Her Feet, and has a Crown of Twelve Stars
  - i. A reference to Joseph's dream in Genesis 37:9-10 - Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, "Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me. He related *it* to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?"
- b. The Sun and Moon represent the Patriarchal family of Jacob, and the 12 stars represent the 12 sons of Jacob – Israel
- c. Notice the woman is here seen as a "sign" in heaven. This represents God's true Israel. The perfect elect of God by grace through faith. Later she will be seen on earth.
  - i. True Israel has always been a matter of God's grace through faith not ancestral lineage
  - ii. Romans 9:6-13 proves that being truly part of "Israel" was by God's grace rather than by birth.
- d. God's people are often depicted as a woman
  - i. In Ezekiel 16, Israel is depicted as a woman, found and redeemed, Adorned with gifts and blessings.

##### 2. The Woman is Laboring in Childbirth (2)

- a. The Woman is Pregnant
- b. The Woman is Crying out in Birth Pains
  - i. Many OT pictures show Israel as a woman in labor pains

- Isa. 26:17-18 - As the pregnant woman approaches *the time* to give birth, She writhes *and* cries out in her labor pains, Thus were we before You, O Lord. We were pregnant, we writhed *in labor*, We gave birth, as it seems, *only* to wind. We could not accomplish deliverance for the earth, Nor were inhabitants of the world born.
- Micah 4:9-10 - Writhe and labor to give birth, Daughter of Zion, Like a woman in childbirth; For now you will go out of the city, Dwell in the field, And go to Babylon. There you will be rescued; There the Lord will redeem you From the hand of your enemies.
- Micah 5:3 - Therefore He will give them *up* until the time When she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren Will return to the sons of Israel.

ii. We will see how this fits together in this chapter

## B. The Sign of The Dragon in Heaven (3-4a)

### 1. The Dragon has Seven Heads and Ten Horns

- a. Everyone agrees this is Satan – it is stated in v. 9
- b. Why seven heads, diadems, and 10 horns?
  - i. We have already seen significance of the number seven
    - Some say that it appears “perfect” (because of the number seven)
    - Some link the diadems to its authority and we have already seen that the horn is symbolic of power in the OT (see chapter 5)
  - ii. We will see a beast rising in the next chapter with seven heads, seven diadems, and ten horns. By the descriptions, Satan is linked to this beast. Satan is the power operating behind it (we will save the beast's identity until then)
  - iii. We will also see that the description of the beast in the next chapter is a composite picture of Daniel's four beasts in Daniel 7. Together they all have seven heads and ten horns.
    - So the description of Satan here is the operative power behind this force of evil that brings destruction

- What we have here is a frightening combination of images that parody the lamb who has seven horns
- Remember we are not being told what Satan “looks like,” we are being told what Satan “is like.”

## 2. The Dragon Wields Immense Power (4a)

- a. The sweeping down of stars is an allusion to Daniel 8:10 which describes an eschatological enemy persecuting God’s forces
  - i. It is debated whether this is a picture of the fall of Satan and his angels falling from heaven or whether the “stars” here refers to Israelites being destroyed
    - Stars are often used as images of angels (Job. 38:7; Rev. 9:1)
    - Stars are also used to describe kings and rulers of the people
  - ii. The little horn of Daniel 8, on which this is based, is applied to Antiochus Epiphanes, but here we are shown the power that is ultimately behind all those that seek to destroy God’s people
- b. This is an intense description of Satan’s might and power to destroy
  - i. He devastates with his tail in the same way the “little horn” of Daniel 8 does with his forces
  - ii. He is an agent of destruction and chaos – the tremendous force behind all God’s enemies

## II. The Conquering Gospel Overcomes Satan (4b-11)

### A. The Dragon’s Opposition of the Woman and Child (4b-6)

#### 1. The Dragon Seeks To Destroy The Woman’s Child (4b)

- a. All the Dragon’s rage is pointed toward the child that this woman will bring forth
- b. He desires simply to wage war against God’s messiah, the agent of salvation.
- c. The Child is the Messiah that will come from God’s remnant

- i. Even before his birth, Satan raged against him

- ii. Herod killed all of Bethlehem’s children attempting to find him (see Matt. 2:16)

#### 2. The Child is Victorious (5)

##### a. The Child Born is Destined To Rule (5a)

- i. The child is a picture of Christ. He is to rule the nations with a rod of iron

- This image comes from Psalm 2:7-9 which foretells the coming Messiah

- “I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.’ Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the *very* ends of the earth as Your possession. You shall <sup>a</sup>break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.’ ”

b. The Child Ascends to God’s Throne (5b)

- This is a snapshot of the whole ministry and life of Christ culminating in his ascension to the throne of God.
- Jesus has been given all power and authority in heaven and on earth. He has accomplished salvation and defeated Satan.
  - Satan has failed to kill the seed of the woman.
  - This is the fulfillment of the promise given at the fall of man – Gen. 3:15 - And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”
  - All through the OT we see reminders of that promise. The barren woman bringing forth a seed from the Lord – Eve, Sarah, Rebecca, Hannah, all the way down to Mary.
  - In his death, resurrection, and ascension the promised seed has indeed crushed the serpent’s head

3. The Woman Flees To The Wilderness (6)

- This reminds us of Israel in the wilderness of Exodus – although we can’t draw a direct comparison – here she flees to the wilderness for protection from the dragon and to be nourished by God
- The woman is the true Israel, the true people of God – which now are revealed as those in Jesus Christ – the remnant of Israel
  - These are Jewish Christians in Jerusalem that flee to the hills and wilderness of Judea in obedience to Christ’s command at the Olivet Discourse
  - The time of there stay in the wilderness is 1260 days – 3 ½ years – until the city and temple are destroyed

- iii. This is the mother church at Jerusalem from which all believers originated as missionaries went out. She is nourished and protected as the external remnants of the Old Covenant are destroyed.

B. The Dragon is Conquered and Cast Out (7-9)

1. NOTE: This section is an explanatory recapitulation of what has come before – It is next in visionary sequence not chronologically.
2. A War is Seen In Heaven (7)
  - a. In Daniel 10, Michael fights against evil angels behind the armies of Israel's enemies. (Persia / Greece)
    - i. In Daniel, Michael fights together with the Son of Man for Israel (Dan. 10:20-21)
    - ii. He is also prophesied to arise during an eschatological time of great distress in Daniel 12:1 - "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands *guard* over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.
  - b. Who is Michael?
    - i. Some say this is an image symbolizing Christ himself.
      - Michael is seen as the ruler of angels (archangel) which is a reference to the Captain of the Lord's Host in Joshua – The Captain in Joshua is the pre-incarnate Son.
      - Michael appears in heaven after the ascension of the Son and leads the heavenly army to defeat the dragon, which is what Christ has done.
      - It is possible
    - ii. Because of the allusion to Daniel's text, I lean toward Michael being a representative of the heavenly army that fights alongside (or perhaps as a representative of) the Son of Man
  - c. Probably not a literal war in heaven, but a picture of the fight to destroy the Messiah and hinder God's saving purposes
3. The Dragon is Defeated (8)
  - a. The Dragon's defeat here will be connected with the work of the Messiah in v.10-11

- b. This is probably not the pre-creation fall of Satan and his angels but the defeat of the evil powers through the gospel.
  - c. Satan with all his tactics and devices has been overcome and defeated in the gospel. His head has been crushed by the seed of the woman.
- 4. The Dragon and His Angels Are Cast Down (9)
  - a. The Ancient Serpent – from the garden, the one who deceived Adam and Even
  - b. Satan = Adversary / Devil = Slanderer
  - c. It is in the area of his accusation and deception of the world that Satan is defeated. Because of the gospel, he has no more foothold to accuse the brethren
  - d. He is cast out (Ekballo) = He is thrown out / excommunicated / removed
    - i. John 12:31 - Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.
    - ii. John 16:11 - Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.
    - iii. Col. 2:15 - And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.
    - iv. Heb. 2:14 - Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;
    - v. 1 John 3:8 - He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.
    - vi. Luke 10 – Jesus said he saw Satan fall like lightning as the gospel went out with the 70 disciples.
  - e. This interpretation fits with the next verse pronouncing the coming of salvation and the kingdom
- C. The Gospel Has Triumphed Over the Accuser (10-11)
  - 1. Salvation and Christ's Authority have Come (10a) Salvation has been achieved
    - a. The power of God has been demonstrated
    - b. The kingdom of God has come
    - c. The authority of the Messiah has been displayed
  - 2. The Accuser is Defeated By The Gospel (10b-11)
    - a. Notice the area where Satan can no longer work
      - i. He is called the accuser of the brethren

- ii. He is said to accuse the brethren day and night before the throne – This is his main activity – day and night.
  - iii. Now he has been cast out – there is no accusation that can stand in God’s presence for those who have been purchased by Christ
  - iv. Satan is banished from bringing accusation. No one can bring a charge against God’s elect.
- b. The Remnant have Overcome Satan (11)
  - i. The Brethren themselves who have been accused have conquered him
  - ii. Notice how they have overcome him
    - The blood of the Lamb
      - The blood paid for their sins and their adoption
      - They can no longer be accused for things that have been atoned for
    - The word of their Testimony
      - Their lives demonstrate their adoption in Christ
      - They are willing to give up their lives for their faith in Christ
  - iii. Satan accuses God’s people but it is Satan who is cast out not His people.
    - The Christians are suffering and need to be assured that they have won and their adversary is defeated
    - They will suffer but they are victorious
    - Overcome here doesn’t mean exempt from persecution or suffering, but it means faithful through it all
    - Some see this group as a special class of people from the future tribulation period.
      - John himself suffered because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 1:9)
      - John says all those in the seven churches were fellow partakers in tribulation and the kingdom (1:9)
      - The same language is used in 6:9, 11)

### III. The Defeated Dragon Now Rages (12-17)

#### A. Satan Then Rages On The Land (12)

##### 1. Rejoice O Heavens For Satan is Defeated (12a)

- a. This is the only occurrence of the plural “heavens” in Revelation

- i. This echoes the OT prophet's call for the heavens to rejoice when God's kingdom and judgment takes place
    - ii. See Deut. 32:43; 1 Chron. 16:31; Ps. 95:11; Isa. 44:23, 45:8, 49:13
  - b. This is covenant language denoting the fulfillment of the Covenant promises
- 2. Woe to the Land For Satan is Come Down To you (12b)
  - a. Satan is cast out and defeated but he still rages even though he knows his time is short
  - b. The crucifixion / resurrection has sealed his fate, now all he can do is attempt to wreak havoc, to kill, steal, and destroy – to terrorize.
  - c. The Land represents national Israel, on whom the judgments are falling. While true Israel is found in Christ, those outwardly religious will be turned over in judgment.
- B. The Dragon Wages War Against the Woman (13-16)
  - 1. The Dragon Pursued The Woman (13)
    - a. He realizes he has failed to kill the Son and hinder the salvation of God's remnant
    - b. He persecutes / pursues the woman
      - i. This may refer specifically and directly to the Jewish Christian church in the first century.
      - ii. The woman represents the true elect of God from the beginning to the end. – now that Christ has come and finished his messianic work, the people of God are defined only in Him.
      - iii. Certainly Satan is attacking today, but in the first century, it was the Jewish church in Jerusalem that was on the front lines of Satan's activities. – we have already seen the Jewish church leaving Jerusalem as the Roman armies surrounded the city
  - 2. The Woman is Fed and Protected by God (14)
    - a. Here we have a restatement of v. 6
    - b. The newly created people are brought out of their oppression in a new exodus from spiritual Egypt.
    - c. They are protected and grow for the 3 ½ years (which we have already seen corresponds to Daniel's time, times, and half a time when the power of the holy people will be shattered)
  - 3. The Dragon Pours A Flood to Kill The Woman (15)
    - a. The flood is Satan's attack and persecution of the church
    - b. Water overflowing is an OT symbol of armies conquering or attacking the people of God (See Dan.



11:10, 22, 26, 40; Ps. 88:17; Isa. 8:7-8, 17:12-13; Jer.  
46:8; 47:2; 51:55; Hos. 5:10

4. The Land Takes the Attack of The Dragon (16)

- a. The Land (the promised land and the old remnants of the first covenant) take the brunt of the attack
- b. Christ's people in the city escaped and the Roman flood came and destroyed all that lay in the land

C. The Dragon's Present War Against The Other Children (17)

1. Satan is unsuccessful in destroying the Messiah and he is unsuccessful in destroying the early Jewish church
2. Now he turns his sights on the rest of the woman's children, he now seeks after the "rest of the seed" which is the church as a whole – all those who are co-heirs with Christ.