

REVELATION 12:1-6

Chapter 12 records the heavenly battle between the archangel Michael and Satan (12:7). Satan and his demons were cast out of heaven (12:9), and Satan in turn pursues the woman with the Child, and they were forced to flee into the wilderness (12:13). Chapter 12 ends with the defeat of Satan, a fact highlighted by the use of the phrases “cast down” and “cast out” (12:9, 10, 13). In Chapter 12, we see Satan as a five-time loser.

- Satan attempted to devour the male child, but God snatched him up to his throne (12:5).
- Satan fought against Michael and his angels but lost (12:9).
- The dragon pursued the woman, but God prepared a place for her in the desert (12:6, 14).
- The serpent wanted the woman to drown in a torrent, but the earth swallowed the river (12:15-16).
- Satan lost when he waged war against the remnant of the woman’s seed, but the remnant kept God’s commands (12:17).

The record of the woman’s struggle with Satan is the fulfilment of the prophecy in Genesis, when God announced, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15). And this marks the start of the spiritual warfare between the people of God and Satan.

The Person who will end the battle is our Lord Jesus Christ, and Revelation 12 traces the fulfillment of God’s promise that the seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15).

Chapter 12 can be divided in the following way.

- Verses 1-6 – the Satan was ready to destroy the woman’s seed at birth
- Verses 7-9 – war in heaven
- Verses 10-12 – an interlude and a hymn of victory
- Verses 13-17 – Satan’s war with a second report on Satan’s war against the woman and her offspring.

REVELATION 12:1-6

¹ And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

² And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

³ And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

⁴ And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

⁵ And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

⁶ And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days. (Revelation 12:1–6)

A. And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: (Revelation 12:1)

The phrase “wonder” [Gk: *sēmeion*] is also translated “sign” (15:1) and “miracle” (13:14; 16:14; 19:20). The word “sign” appears seven times in Revelation, and it is used to portray both the works of God (12:1, 3; 15:1) and Satan (13:13, 4; 16:14; 19:20).

It is from the same root word translated “signified” in Revelation 1:1. It tells us that what John sees is symbolic. In other words, it is a symbol, and this is not a real woman in the heavens standing literally on the moon. Rather, the things that John sees signify certain truths.

B. And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: (Revelation 12:1)

You will also find in this drama are three main characters – the woman (12:1), the dragon (12:3), and the man-child of the woman (12:5). To understand the drama, you must know the characters.

John saw “a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars” (12:1). There are four important women in Revelation.

- Jezebel of Thyatira (2:20)
- The woman who struggles to give birth and then flees from the dragon to the wilderness (12:1-6).
- The “great whore” who has the title, “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (17:5).
- The bride (19:7; 21:2, 9; 22:17).



Who is this woman? It can be taken literally or symbolically. Literally, the woman here is believed to be Mary. This is the Roman Catholic position.

Symbolically, depending in one’s theological position, the woman is interpreted as being either the church or Israel.

1. Church

Church. The woman here has and will be persecuted by Satan, and it is taken to mean that she represents the elect in the OT and NT, Jews and Gentiles. This view is disputed because...

- It is Christ who gave birth to the church and not the other way around (Matt. 16:18).
- The symbolisms of the woman being clothed with the sun and stars directly allude to Joseph and hence Israel.
- The reference to the sun and moon and stars are often associated with God's promises to Israel (Ps. 89:35-37)
- The singular child born to a woman strongly points to the promise God gave to Eve (Gen. 3:15), and that the man-child (12:13) is our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Israel

Israel is regarded by God to be his wife (Isa. 54:3-6; Jer. 31:32; Ezek. 16:32). The description of woman in Revelation 12:1 has features to identical Genesis 37:9-11. In Genesis 37:9-11, Joseph was the one star to whom the sun (his father Jacob) and the moon (his mother Rachel), and the other eleven stars (his brothers) bowed down. In that dream, Joseph represents the glory of Israel.

Likewise, this woman in Revelation 12 is exalted above everybody else. It represents a nation that is above all nations (Gen. 12:2).

It also must be pointed out that there may also specific individuals who make up that woman. She is seen as the one...

- To whom God has given the promise of a Redeemer (Gen. 3:15).
- Whose descendants led to the creation of the nation of Israel through whom the redeemer would come (Isa. 7:14; 9:6-7; Mic. 5:2; Rom. 9:5).
- Who fulfilled the promise by the virgin birth of the Messiah (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:25; Luke 1:34).
- Who will ultimately be fulfilled in His Second Coming to establish the Millennial Kingdom and to rule in the line of King David of Israel (Isa. 9:7; Jer. 23:5; 30:9; Amos 9:11; Zech. 6:12-13; Luke 1:32-33; Acts 1:6; Rev. 20:4).

Two Women	
Woman with sun and Moon (Rev. 12)	Woman who Rode the Beast (Rev. 17)
Clothed with the sun (12:1)	Clothed with purple and scarlet (17:4)
A virgin (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:25; Luke 1:34-35)	A fornicator (17:4)
In pain (12:2)	At ease, drunk (17:4, 6; 18:7)
Stands (12:1)	Sits (17:3, 9, 15)
Supported by moon (12:1)	Supported by beast (17:3)
Head crowned (12:1)	Head marked as harlot (17:5)
Persecuted by dragon (12:4, 13)	Rides beast empowered by dragon (13:1-4; 17:3)

Flees to wilderness (12:6, 14)	Seen from the wilderness (17:3)
Associated with Jerusalem (12:5 cf. 11:8)	Associated with Babylon (17:5, 18).

C. And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: (Revelation 12:1)

The woman is clothed with the sun. The word “clothed” means “to be wrapped around,” the connotation is that she is clothed for the purposes of protection (Ps. 84:11; see also Ezek. 16:8) and beauty (Isa. 61:10; Ezek. 16:10).

A primary function of clothing is to provide shelter and for purposes of beauty. In the Scriptures, both the sun and the moon often appear together as a dual witness for God. When God created the sun and moon, He said they would be “for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years” (Gen. 1:14). The sun and the moon are to be signs pointing to something else (Jer. 31:35-37).

The woman is also described as standing on the moon. The idea here is not that she is trampling upon the moon, but she is being supported by the moon.

The woman is also crowned with twelve stars. In Revelation 12:1, there are twelve stars, and this is an allusion to Joseph’s dream which mentions the sun, moon, and stars (Gen. 37:9-10). In other words, the twelve stars represent the twelve tribes of Israel.

D. And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. (Revelation 12:2)

This woman is pregnant and about to deliver. The first thing to note is that this vision does not mention at all the father of the child. The absence of a father is significant as it points strongly toward the virgin birth (Isa. 7:14; Luke 1:34).

Second, it is the woman who produces the child and not the other way around! If we keep in mind that the woman is the source of the child, and if the child is Christ, the woman cannot be the church.

The woman was travailing in birth; in other words, she was in the midst of birth pangs at the time John saw her. There are many instances in the Bible where the picture of a woman travailing in birth is used (Isa. 26:17; 66:7; Mic. 4:10; Gal. 4:19).

However, in Revelation 12:2, this is one instance where the pain is symbolic and literal; literal because it is the fulfillment in the virgin birth of Christ by Mary. However, it is also symbolic because the travailing in pain is the result of sin (Gen. 3:13-16),

There are several parallels in Revelation 12 and Genesis 3 that shows the link the between the last days and the Fall.

- A woman and the serpent.
- Enmity between the woman and the serpent.
- Conflict between her offspring and the serpent.
- The woman will experience labour pains.

This is all part of God's redemption plan. In the flesh, Revelation 12:2 refers to the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. But when John wrote the last book in the Bible, the birth of Jesus had taken place a century earlier. The lesson here is that John is highlighting the fact that the birth of Jesus is the reason for the attacks Satan against this woman.

E. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. (Revelation 12:3)

John writes of a second wonder in heaven – a great red dragon. There are several things to note about this dragon.

- The dragon's colour is red [Gk: *purros*], which literally means "fiery red."
- The dragon is a key player in the events of the end time (12:9).
- It is this dragon who gives the beast his power, throne, and great authority (13:2)
- This dragon also receives worship along with the beast (13:4).
- The dragon's words are those spoken by the False Prophet (13:11).
- The dragon will be cast into the lake of fire (20:10).
- The dragon is known by several names.
 1. Satan
 2. The great dragon
 3. The old serpent
 4. The devil
 5. The deceiver

F. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. (Revelation 12:3)

This dragon has seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns. These numbers ought not to be taken literally but symbolically. The number seven signifies completeness, and the number ten is the number of fullness. The seven heads and ten horns refer to the dragon's complete control of the world, which is why he is called the prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).

After the fall into sin, Adam no longer ruled in God's creation, but Satan ruled by usurping that power (Luke 4:6). The dragon dominates the world by governing global empires, principal authorities, and political movements, and by controlling commerce.

The meaning of the seven heads is given in Revelation 17:9-10. The seven heads signify complete control. The phrase “ten horns” appears in Daniel 7:7 and 24, where it portrays a beast that terrifies humanity and personifies ten kings.

The word “crown” [Gk: *diadem*] is used here (verse 3), but in verse 1, the woman who wears the crown of twelve stars, which is *stephanos*. A *diadem* is a crown of royalty; whereas *stephanos* is a crown of victory. Satan is a defeated foe who cannot wear a *Stephanos*, and his *diadem* is nothing but pretended royalty.

G. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. (Revelation 12:4)

The word “drew” is also translated “dragging” (John 21:8).

Who are the stars?

- Literal stars because of Revelation 8:12.
- Godly Jews who obeyed God’s law, but were slain by the invading Greek forces of Antiochus Epiphanes (168-164 BC).
- Angels whom Satan led into rebellion against God. These angels have been consigned to the bottomless pit. God prepared this horrible place for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6).

The casting out of heaven is not the final punishment. Here, it simply refers to the fall in sin (Isa. 14:12; Ezek. 28:14). This fall would have occurred before the serpent’s temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden.

H. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. (Revelation 12:4)

The goal of the dragon since the curse pronounced on him by God in the Garden of Eden has been to destroy the line that would lead to the birth of the Messiah. There are many incidents in the Old Testament history where we see the godly line on the verge of extermination, but in the end, God’s will always prevail.

- Cain killed Abel but God prepared Seth (Gen. 4).
- Pharaoh tried to kill all the baby boys, but God preserved Moses, as the one who would deliver the children out of Egypt (Exod. 1).
- Saul tried to kill David. Had Saul been successful, the Messianic line would have been terminated (1 Sam. 18).
- During the periods of the kings, Athaliah gave an order to kill all the royal seed of the house of Judah, but God preserved Joash (2 Kings 11).
- During the time of the exile, Haman plotted to kill all the Jews in the Empire, but God used Esther and Mordecai to save His people (Esther).
- In the New Testament, Herod also ordered the slaughter of baby boys two years and under in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:16), but God preserved Mary and Joseph and the Christ child by having them depart for Egypt.

- The most direct attempt was the crucifixion of Christ. Ultimately, the seed of the serpent did in fact bruise the heel of the redeemer, but this “victory” was empty because the serpent’s head was crushed in return.

Now that our Lord Jesus Christ has won the battle by His death and resurrection and ascension, the next step of Satan to thwart God’s plan is to persecute the Church who has been entrusted with the work of spreading the Gospel, and to cause confusion by offering a counterfeit (John 8:44; 2 Cor. 4:3-4; Gal. 1:6-7). And the last days shall be days of deception (Matthew 24:3-5, 24-26).

G. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. (Revelation 12:5)

This is the fulfillment of the messianic prophecy concerning the incarnation of Christ (Isa. 7:14; 66:7).

The messianic prophecies mentioned in the Old Testament concerning the birth and death of our Lord Jesus Christ are very specific and detailed so that the identity of the Messiah would not be mistaken.

Prophecy	OT	NT
Seed of a woman	Gen. 3:15	Gal. 4:4
Seed of Abraham	Gen.12:3	Acts 3:25; Matt. 1:1
Seed of Isaac	Gen. 17:19	Matt. 1:2
Seed of Jacob	Num. 24:17	Luke 3:34
From the tribe of Judah	Gen. 49:10	Luke 3:33
Heir to the throne of David	Isa. 9:7	Matt. 1:1
Place of Birth	Mic. 5:2	Matt. 2:1
Time of Birth	Dan. 9:25	Luke 2:1-2
Born of a Virgin	Isa. 7:14	Matt. 1:18
Massacre of infants	Jer. 31:15	Matt. 2:16
Flight into Egypt	Hos. 1:1	Matt. 2:14

In Greek, the word “child” [Gk: *uhiōn*] is in the masculine gender, and that is followed by a masculine adjective, “man” [Gk: *arrhena*]. Therefore, the first part of verse 5 reads as follows – “She gave birth to a son, male...”

John’s wording here seems redundant: a son must necessarily be male. The reason for this superfluous construction is that John wants to emphasise the human relationship of the woman and the son. Through her, this son would take on human flesh.

H. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. (Revelation 12:5)

This man child will rule all nations with an iron rod. This rule by rod of iron is also mentioned in Revelation 2:27 and 19:15 (see also Matt. 2:6). It is also “feed” (Luke 17:7; John 21:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 9:7; 1 Pet. 5:2; Jude 1:12).

To “rule” [Gk: *poimainein*] means to “shepherd” – leading, guiding, protecting, as a shepherd. The noun form is “pastor” (Eph. 4:11) and “shepherd” (Matt. 9:36; 25:32; 26:31; Mark 6:34; 14:27; Luke 2:8, 15-20; John 10:2, 11-16; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 2:25).

The Messiah is the great Shepherd that provides for, leads, and takes care of the sheep. However, His rule also applies to those who do not believe on Him (Ps. 2:9).

I. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. (Revelation 12:5)

John refers to the ascension only, and omitting the suffering, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The reasons for this are as follows:

- The ascension marks the defeat of Satan.
- The ascension marks the beginning of His rule over the nations.
- The ascension prepares for the next section, which will be the war in heaven (12:7-9).

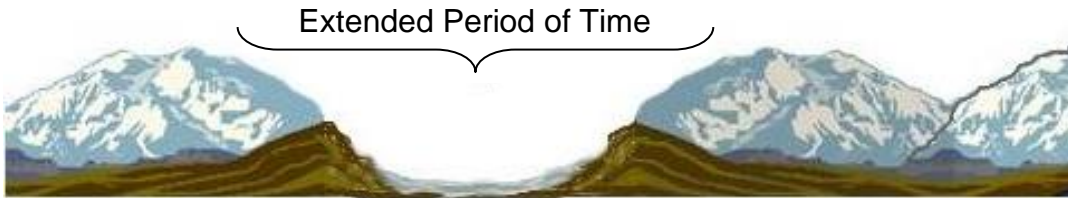
J. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. (Revelation 12:6)

After the birth of Christ, Satan’s ploy was to prevent Christ from His redemptive death. The prophecies concerning the death of our Lord Jesus are as specific as the prophecies concerning His birth. If Satan succeeded in killing Christ in any way than that which has been prophesied in Scriptures, the redemption plan would be thwarted. But God’s plan would not be thwarted.

In Revelation 12:6, we have one of the characteristics of prophetic passages – events which appear side-by-side in the text but are often separated by long periods of time. The reason for this is

- Prophets were only shown important highlights of the final development (1 Pet. 1:10-11).
- The full range of history was often collapsed in their view, much as when looking through a telescope.





Examples:

- The First and Second Comings of Christ are placed in the same passage (Isa. 61:1-2; Zech. 9:9-10; Mal. 3:1-2; 4:5-6; Luke 4:17-19), although the two events are by now some 2,000 years apart.
- The first and second resurrections are placed in the same passage (Dan. 12:2; John 5:28-29), but there are 1,000 years apart.

In Revelation 12:6, we have a similar case. The child is caught up and the woman flees. The child was caught up is a reference to the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that took place over 1,900 years ago; and in verse 6, it seems that the woman has yet to flee.

Zechariah saw the same sequence (Zech. 13:7-9). Both Zechariah's passage and Revelation 12:6 refer to the same events. The first event refers to the crucifixion of Christ in Zechariah (shepherd smitten) and the ascension in Revelation (child caught up unto God). The second event refers to the flight of the woman (12:6) and scattering of the sheep (Zech. 13:7b). However, between these two events are a long period of time.

K. **And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. (Revelation 12:6)**

John says that the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared beforehand by God. This seems to suggest that there is a specific location in the wilderness and not just the wilderness in general (see 12:14).

Some have suggested that it will be the wilderness that is commonly known to the Jews – Moab, Ammon, Edom, places east of the River Jordan and the southern tip of the Dead Sea.

Based on the study of geographical names found passages that deal with the end times that this place, some have postulated that this place may be Bozrah/Petra, near Edom.

Whatever the case, we know that it will be a city prepared by God. This means that the city was prepared even before the flight was to take place.



- L. **And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. (Revelation 12:6)**

The woman stayed away for 1,260 days (see also 11:3), and this is an indication of when she flees, and the event caused her to flee. This period is also described as “time and times and half a time” (12:14). This corresponds to half of the 70th Week of Daniel. This is the second half of the week during which the nations trample the holy city (11:2) and the beast has authority (Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:5). A period Jesus referred to as consisting of “great tribulation” (Matt. 24:21).

The woman will flee into the wilderness. But the safety is not in the wilderness. The safety is that she will flee to the place prepared by God. “The LORD of hosts *is* with us; the God of Jacob *is* our refuge” (Ps. 46:7, 11). The point is – do not just flee, but flee to Jesus!