

REVELATION

Chapter 12

The Woman and the Dragon

And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. 2 She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. 4 His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. 5 She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, 6 and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

12:1–15:8† The fourth vision, consisting of seven separate visions: (1) the woman and the dragon (12:1–17); (2) the beast out of the sea (13:1–10); (3) the beast out of the earth (13:11–18); (4) the Lamb and the 144,000 (14:1–5); (5) the three angels (14:6–13); (6) the harvest of the earth (14:14–20); (7) the seven angels with seven plagues (15:1–8). This section (12:1–15:8) presents another symbolic representation of another aspect of the entire NT era. (CSB)

12:1-14:20 Introduction to Revelation 12–14, an Interregnum

Chapters 12–14 serve as an interregnum, that is, *a pause* between the second (8:6–11:19) and the third (15:1–16:21) sevenfold visions of events taking place on earth. During this pause opposing forces vie to rule. This break between the second and third earthly visions is more than an interlude, such as the interlude that appeared between the sixth and seventh seals in the first sevenfold vision (7:1–17) and the one that transpired between the sixth and seventh trumpet-angels of the second sevenfold vision (10:1–11:14). For in this break between the second and third visions there is a lengthy pause or cessation by which the normal flow of the visionary prophecy in Revelation concerning events on earth is interrupted. The portrayal of events on earth is *suspended* in order to permit John to see a cosmic vision expounding events that *overarch* what he has been seeing happening on earth. What John views in Revelation 12–14 *dominates and controls* the events that he sees taking place on earth. That is, *these chapters visually explain to John why the events on earth are occurring*. (CC pp. 324-325)

The events depicted in this interregnum are cosmic in character because the actions depicted occur both above and on the earth. For what is portrayed before the eyes of John is nothing less than the cosmic war between God and the prince of darkness, a war that takes place in the heavens and then drops down to earth. This warfare between God and Lucifer (the fallen angel, see Is 14:12; cf. Is 27:1; Lk 10:17–18) is the *source and cause* of the warfare between God's people on earth and the forces of evil. Revelation 12–14 is thus an exposition and an explanation of all that John sees happening on the earth from the time of Christ's exaltation up to the end of this present world at Christ's return. (CC pp. 324-325)

Chapter 12 presents the awesome scene of the woman with Child, the dragon who attempts to destroy the Child, and (after the Child is taken to heaven) the war in heaven which results in the expulsion of Satan from God's heavenly presence. The chapter concludes with the dragon venting

his fury on the woman and her offspring. The vision continues in chapter 13 with the scene of two terrifying beasts that the dragon conjures up for use in his warfare against the woman and her seed. The cosmic vision of this interregnum concludes in chapter 14 with scenes of victory and rejoicing over the judgment and overthrow of the evil forces of the dragon. (CC pp. 324-325)

12:1 *great sign*. An extraordinary spectacle or event that points beyond itself (cf. Lk 21:11, 25; Ac 2:19). (CSB)

“A great sign” (σημεῖον μέγα, 12:1) appeared in heaven. The phrase suggests and points to something of importance. For a “sign” in the biblical sense is a visual presentation that exhibits something of the divine. It could be a visible token which serves as a confirmation of a gracious promise of God, or a visible guarantee of God’s presence (see Gen 9:12–17; Ex 3:12; 7:3). In his gospel John called miracles of Jesus “signs” (σημεῖα) because they were visible evidences of the saving presence of God in Jesus Christ (E.g., Jn. 2:11, 23; 3:2; 4:54; 6:2, 14; 20:30). In Lk 2:12 the “sign” (σημεῖον) given to the shepherds was that they would find the Christ Child when they found a Child “wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a feeding trough.” (CC p. 325)

a woman clothed with the sun. † Probably a symbolic reference to the believing Messianic community, or the church (see v. 17). (CSB)

Represents God’s people (Israel and the Church), the saints of all times. Consistent with John’s description that he sees this woman “in heaven.” These details emphasize the dignity of God’s people and the fact their true home is with God. (TLSB)

Strikingly, here in 12:1 the word refers to “a woman clothed about with the sun” and with “the moon underneath her feet.” She is referred to as a “great sign,” implying that what she is and represents is of great importance. The sign of the woman appears “in heaven,” indicating that her presence is before God in heaven (see 4:4; 7:9–17). She is from God, that is, she is related to his saving presence. Yet the woman and what she represents is also on earth (12:13). (CC pp. 325-326)

The woman was *clothed* in the brilliance of Christ as exhibited by the sun. Her face and appearance *themselves* do not shine like the sun, for that is reserved for the exalted Son of Man (Rev 1:16; cf. Mt 17:2) and for the angel that stands in the place of Christ and represents him when commissioning John and the church (Rev 10:1, 11). But God has put around her the brilliant, sunlit glory of his Christ, signifying that in Christ and because of him she stands in God’s holy presence. “Clothed about with the sun” also suggests how much God in Christ honors the woman. (CC p. 326)

moon under her feet – The moon is “underneath her feet.” While “clothed about with the sun” indicates glory, “the moon underneath her feet” suggests dominion. In the OT the sun and moon are mentioned on occasion in reference to the glory and beauty of a human being. In Gen 37:9 Joseph saw in a dream the sun and moon and eleven stars bowing down to him. In Song 6:10 the woman who is King Solomon’s beloved appears like the dawn, and she is beautiful like the moon and brilliant or pure like the sun. In the pseudepigraphal writing of the Testament of Naphtali (5:4–5), Levi is likened to the sun and Judah to the moon. In those writings both the sun and moon are used to symbolize honor and glory conferred upon an individual. Here in Rev 12:1 the sun is also used as a symbol of glory and honor, but the moon, because of its position under the feet, is used more as a symbol of dominion and authority which the woman exercises as she carries out her mission given by God (see 10:11; 11:1–13). (CC p. 326)

twelve stars. Cf. the 12 tribes of Israel. (CSB)

TLSB p. 217 – Twelve is associated with the sons of Jacob (Gen 35:22b-26) from whom descended the tribes of Israel (Ex. 28:21; Nu. 1:1-16). Twelve thus represents the people of God. This later applied to the BT people of God, the Church, led by the twelve apostles (Mt. 19:28).

The woman wears “a crown of twelve stars” on her head. The crown or wreath (στέφανος) was a reward given because of victory in a contest or struggle of some kind. Her crown is made up of or contains twelve stars. In 1:20 seven stars in the right hand of the exalted Son of Man represent the seven angels of the churches. Here the twelve stars of the woman’s crown represent twelve of the twenty-four elders enthroned around the great throne of God in heaven in 4:4. Prior to her Child’s birth, her twelve stars signify the twelve elders representing the twelve tribes of Israel, who in turn represent the people of God in the OT. After her Child is born and is taken to heaven, the crown of twelve stars would then represent the other twelve elders, who stand for the twelve apostles and the NT church. The twelve stars of the crown signify that the woman represents the entire people of God, both Israel and the church of Christ. “Salvation is of the Jews” (Jn 4:22) and so Jesus is born of Mary, *but* he was born to be the Savior of all people, Jew and Gentile alike. The people of God are victorious because of the Christ Child, and they are always under the protective care of the angels. The crown also suggests that the woman is the crown jewel of God, his pride and prized possession in Christ. (CC pp. 326-327)

12:2 *crying out in birth pain.* Cf. the similar language describing the rebirth of Jerusalem in Isa 66:7 (see Mic 4:10). (CSB)

This birth represents the coming of the Savior in the flesh. (cf. Micah 5:3). The woman is not only the mother of all believers (Gal. 4:26); she is also helped to bear and nurture the Christ, her Savior and Lord (Mt. 1:23). (TLSB)

With the exception of Jesus Christ, no human figure in the entire Bible is so clothed and glorified as this woman. This should not be surprising when it is noted that she bears a Child “who is going to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod” (Rev 12:5), that is, the Messiah. Mary is called “favored of God,” because the grace of God was with her (Lk 1:28–30). In addition Mary would be called blessed among women because she would bear the Christ Child (Lk 1:31–33, 42). Here in Rev 12:1–2 this honor is typified by the sun and the crown with which the woman is adorned, and the dominion she inherits through her Son is typified by her feet on the moon. (CC p. 327)

Mary, the mother of the Christ Child, is the model for the woman here in 12:1–2, for the woman, as does Mary, symbolizes and represents the church. The woman thus represents the faithful people of God who longed for the Messiah to come, and who by their faith can be said metaphorically to be the mother of the Child and thus to have given birth to him. After the birth and the ascension of the Child, the woman becomes and represents the church of the apostles. As Swete says, “Doubtless the Church of the Old Testament was the Mother of whom Christ came after the flesh. But here ... no sharp dividing line is drawn between the Church of the Old Testament and the Christian Society.” (CC pp. 327-328)

The church, symbolized by the woman, is adorned with the sun and the crown of stars. This certainly illustrates how much God loves and honors his people (see Is 62:3; Zech 2:7–8; 9:16; Eph 5:27). The fact that the moon is under her feet suggests that she is the dominant entity in his creation. Under God’s sovereignty all things and all creation are governed for the benefit of the church, to spread and increase the church, care for her, and protect her while in her earthly pilgrimage. For the church is the jewel, the apple of God’s eye. (CC p. 328)

In Revelation three women appear and illustrate important roles. The woman of 12:1 illustrates the church in her beauty and position before God. The harlot of 17:1–18:24 in her deceptive beauty represents the anti-church and as such is the archrival and enemy of the woman of 12:1. The bride of the Lamb in 19:7–8 is to be identified with the woman of 12:1 as she meets her husband, the Lord Christ, at the End. (CC p. 328)

12:3 red dragon.† Identified in v. 9 as Satan (cf. 20:2). Dragons abound in the mythology of ancient peoples (Leviathan in Canaanite lore and Set-Typhon, the red crocodile, in Egypt). In the OT they are normally used metaphorically to depict the enemies of God and of Israel (see Ps 74:14; Isa 27:1; Eze 29:3). (CSB)

“Another sign” (σημεῖον) appeared in heaven: “a great red dragon” (12:3). As in the case of the woman with Child, the fact that this other appearance is designated as a “sign” points out that what it pictures is important—yet not as important as the “*great sign*” (12:1) of the woman. The sign of the dragon also appears in heaven, thus indicating that what it depicts is *above* the earth, though it will greatly influence what happens *on* the earth too. (CC p. 328)

seven heads. Symbolizing universal wisdom (cf. 13:1). (CSB)

The dragon has “seven heads and ten horns and upon his heads seven diadems” (12:3). The “seven heads” are similar to the *seven horns* and the *seven eyes* of the Lamb in 5:6. The number seven is God’s number, in particular symbolizing the sevenfold presence of Yahweh through his Holy Spirit (1:4; 3:1; cf. 1:20). The fact that the Lamb in Revelation 5 has seven horns and seven eyes signifies that the exalted Christ is all-powerful (the horns; cf. Lk 1:69) and all-knowing (the eyes, 2 Chr 16:9; Prov 15:3) and that he exercises this power and authority by the Spirit. In the OT the horn symbolized power on earth and the authority to exercise it (e.g., Deut 33:17; Dan 7:8, 24–25). Similarly, the seven eyes refer to the Lord Christ’s omniscience, which also he exercises through the sevenfold presence of the Holy Spirit. The dragon’s seven heads reflect his deceptive claim that *he*, and *not* the Christ, is the spirit who has all knowledge to supervise all earthly matters. Each head is crowned with a diadem reflecting his deceptive claim that he possesses all royalty and lordship. (CC p. 328)

ten horns. Symbolizing great power. (CSB)

The ten horns point to the boastful claim that the dragon has supreme earthly power. The number ten means that while other earthly powers exist, the dragon has dominating power and authority to exercise it. Any other earthly power, symbolized by a single horn, can exist and exercise that power only under the consent and sanction of the dragon and by his guidance. By such an appearance the dragon boasts that he has all wisdom and all power over all the peoples and kingdoms on the earth (cf. Mt 4:8–9). Of course this is all a lie (Jn 8:44)—but a lie that will spell doom for those who believe it. For the color of the dragon is red, the color of murder and bloodshed (see Rev 6:4) of both a spiritual and a physical nature. (CC pp. 328-329)

diadems.† Not the word for crown of victory (*stephanos*), but “diadem,” which implied deity, as worn by Persian rulers and by the mad Caligula and later by Diocletian and still later by the popes. (CSB)

Several descriptive details here resemble the depiction of the Lamb in 5:6. This is one of numerous places where the usurper Satan attempts to pass himself off as divine. (TLSB)

12:4 *tail swept a third ... earth.*† Signifies the great power of the dragon (Satan). (CSB)

Luther colorfully described the abuses and false understandings of the medieval Mass as a “dragon’s tail” because it swept so many people into idolatry (SA II II 11) (TLSB)

The dragon sweeps down with his tail “the third of the stars of heaven” and he throws them “down to the earth” (12:4). Stars represent the angels (1:20). In 9:1 a star falling from heaven represents the angel of the abyss, the devil (9:11; cf. Lk 10:18). Elsewhere in the Scriptures angels are represented by stars (Judg 5:20; Job 38:7) and fallen angels by fallen stars, especially the devil (Is 14:12). In 1 Enoch fallen stars portray fallen angels. Here in Rev 12:4 the casting of the stars out of heaven to the earth dramatically portrays the dragon pulling other angels with him in his rebellion against God. A third of the stars were involved with the dragon in this rebellion. Whether one takes “the third” as a literal number or as a symbolical number, it suggests not a majority, but a sizable minority of the angelic host. This is the only reference in the Bible which suggests the number of angels that the dragon took with him in his opposition to God. (CC p. 329)

Stars ... cast them to the earth. Stars often represent angelic figures (1:16, 20; 9:1). On that understanding, this depiction is likely Satan’s (and his host’s) original fall from heaven, when they first rebelled against God. (TLSB)

devour it. Satan saw an opportunity when Jesus assumed flesh and came into this world. So Satan took every opportunity to thwart God’s plan of salvation. Herod’s slaying of the innocents (Mt 2:16–18) is part of what lies behind this scene. (TLSB)

12:5 *a male child.* The Messiah. (CSB)

God come in the flesh. (TLSB)

The dragon awaits the birth of the Child so that at his birth he might destroy him. The dragon’s opposition is not at first against the woman, but against the Child, for the Child is the focus in the dragon’s warfare against God. Only after the Child has escaped his clutches and is safe in heaven does he vent his rage on the woman in his hatred (12:13). (CC p. 329)

The woman gives “birth to a Son, a male Child” (Rev 12:5). The “male Child” is clearly identified as the One who would “shepherd all the nations with an iron rod.” In Psalm 2 the “Anointed One” (יְהוָה־מָשִׁיחַ, “his [Yahweh’s] Messiah”; LXX: τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ, “his Christ”; Ps 2:2), who is the “King” installed by God on Mt. Zion (Ps 2:6) and who is declared to be his “Son” (Ps 2:7), will rule over all other kings and over all the peoples of the earth (Ps 2:1–2, 8, 10). He will reign with an “iron rod,” breaking them to pieces like pottery (Ps 2:9). The “iron rod” looks beyond Christ’s present hidden reign in grace to his future reign in revealed power and glory, when all opposition to him will be shattered. He will begin that reign after the end of this world at his return, as indicated by the future sense of “who is *going to* [μέλλει] shepherd” (Rev 12:5). In light of that *future* reign in wrath over his foes, all peoples and all kings are invited *now* to fear and love him and thereby through faith enter his present kingdom of grace and escape God’s future wrath (Ps 2:11–12). But that invitation is not extended to the dragon; he can only look forward to the termination of his evil rule and to his own destruction, hence his fury against the Child. (CC p. 330)

rod of iron. Imagery from Ps. 2:8-9, a messianic passage. There, however, the Messiah is depicted crushing the disobedient nations. In 2:27 (letter to Thyatira) His people do so. This

phrase emphasizes that Christian will share in Christ's heavenly reign (Cf. 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:10; 20:4, 6). (TLSB)

In Lk 1:31–32 the angel Gabriel said that the male Child to be born to Mary would rule the house of Jacob on the throne of David forever. Here in Rev 12:5 through the quote of Ps 2:9 the male Child is unmistakably identified as the Messiah of God, the Christ, the Anointed One, and also as the Child of Mary, the promised Savior, whose name is Jesus (see Lk 1:31; cf. Mt 1:21). In his earthly ministry Jesus of Nazareth declared that he was the shepherd promised by God who would lay down his life for the sheep (Jn 10:11–15; cf. Ezek 34:15–24). His staff of office, his shepherd's crook, symbolizes the care of his people (see Jn 10:27–28; cf. Zech 11:7–10). However, at the same time the staff of office represents his authority in judgment by which, like a shepherd, he will separate the sheep from the goats, God's people from unbelievers, and thus in judgment vanquish the enemies of God (Mt 25:32–33; cf. Ps 2:9; Ezek 34:17–22). This shepherding authority of the Christ Child will be shared by God's people according to Rev 2:26–27: in the letter to the church of Thyatira, every Christian who is victorious and keeps doing Christ's work to the End "will shepherd them [the nations] with an iron rod" (ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ). God's people will share in Christ's authority over the nations and in his demonstration of judgment. (CC p. 330-331)

caught up to God. The ascension of Christ. (CSB)

This is Jesus' ascension. It is striking that no reference to His death or resurrection appears here. The emphasis is on His triumph. (TLSB)

The Child is "snatched up to God and to his throne" (12:5). Here the incarnation and the entire ministry, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ are compressed into the words "snatched up to God." "The Seer foreshortens the Gospel history." John's purpose is to emphasize the *final outcome* of Christ's incarnation and passion and resurrection, that is, the dragon's failure to destroy the Child and the victory of the Christ over the enemies of God's people. The fact that Christ was taken "to God and to his throne" (12:5), his ascension, demonstrates and vindicates his victory over the dragon and the forces of death and evil. *He* is exalted and enthroned, not the dragon. Christ's session at the Father's right hand is the ultimate confirmation of his victory, and here it is reenacted and dramatized for John in order to confirm his faith in the victory of the Lamb over the dragon, won years before at the cross and empty tomb. (CC p. 331)

The dragon tried his utmost to destroy the Child when the woman gave birth. The action of King Herod in killing the infants of Bethlehem in his effort to destroy the infant Christ is certainly a part of the dragon's design against the Child. But the Child was snatched from Herod's wicked hands and taken to Egypt (Mt 2:13–18), a type of the final snatching to God at Christ's ascension. Also Jesus' temptation in the wilderness is to be viewed in connection with the dragon's continued effort to intimidate and to destroy the Christ (Mt 4:1–11). Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry the devil attempted to thwart his mission (see Heb 4:15). But despite the agony and the suffering that the Lord Christ endured, the dragon did not and could not destroy the Child. (CC p. 331)

12:6 wilderness.† The church is in exile, in a world far removed from her real home, heaven. Not a wasteland but a place of spiritual refuge (cf. Hos 2:14). (CSB)

As Israel wandered in the wilderness, waiting to enter their true home, so also members of the Church live as pilgrims here on earth until they reach their promised land and true home, the new heavens and the new earth. During this time on earth, God takes care of them. (TLSB)

After the ascension of the Christ to God, “the woman fled into the wilderness” (Rev 12:6). The woman at first, after the model of Mary, typified Israel, the people of God of old. Now she becomes the new and larger Israel, the Christian church, the people of God, both Jews and Gentiles (cf. Eph 2:11–22). The church would not immediately share in the exalted glory of the ascended Christ, for the woman flees “into the wilderness.” As was prophesied of Mary, so now the church would be pierced with a sword (Lk 2:35). The “wilderness” brings to mind the wanderings of Israel in the Desert of Sinai after the deliverance and exodus from Egypt (Ex 19:1–2; Num 14:20–35; Deut 8:2). So now the new Israel, the church of Christ, enters her wilderness experience after having seen and been the recipient of the great salvation worked by the Lamb of God. As the Israelites of old were cared for by God in the barren desert with manna and food and water and safety (Ex 16:4–5, 13; 17:3–7; 23:20), so now the church would be nourished and defended by God in her harsh and dangerous environment. (CC pp. 331-332)

1,260 days.† The NT era. The time of spiritual protection corresponds to the time of persecution. (CSB)

The time period of 1,260 days that God cares for the woman in the desert (12:6) is the same period of time, also designated as 1,260 days, that the two witnesses carry out their prophetic ministry (11:3). Since it amounts to three and a half years, it is also the same length of time as the “forty-two months” when the church, represented by the holy city and its temple, is trampled underfoot (11:1–2). These time periods designate the same period of history, which spans the church age: from the ascension of Christ to the end of the present world at Christ’s return. (CC p. 332)

12:1–6 John portrays God’s people as a struggling woman who is stalked by the devil and forced to flee into the desert. God’s people have to contend with demonic onslaughts. At times, we may despair in this struggle, wondering whether God even remembers us. Yet He unfailingly preserves us in our wilderness sojourn, richly and daily providing everything we need through His Spirit, Word, and Sacraments. • Lord God, preserve us during our earthly exile. Give us a hunger for Your Word and Sacraments so that we never weaken in our faith. We thank You for sending Your Son to be born of a woman, under the Law, so that He might redeem us and bring us to our true home in heaven. Amen.

Satan Thrown Down to Earth

7 Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. 10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers[b] has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. 11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. 12 Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!” 13 And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down

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

12:7 Now. Indicates a new aspect of the vision: what happened after the “child was caught up to God and to His throne” (v 5). (TLSB)

war.† The battle Jesus fought when he came in the flesh to destroy the works of the devil (cf. 1Jn 3:8; Jn 12:31; Lk 10:18). (CSB)

What is now announced and portrayed to John staggers the human imagination. That there should be war before God’s presence in heaven would seem to be unthinkable, utterly out of place. The angels sang at the birth of Jesus, “Glory in highest places to God and *on earth peace*” (δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις θεῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη, Lk 2:14). The pilgrims who welcomed Jesus on Palm Sunday as he rode triumphantly into Jerusalem sang a similar hymn of blessing: “*In heaven peace and glory in highest places*” (ἐν οὐρανῷ εἰρήνη καὶ δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις, Lk 19:38). They were singing about “peace” and “glory” in heaven. According to Luke, then, the Christ was born to bring peace to earth and through his death and resurrection was about to bring peace in heaven. But what does that “peace” mean? While human warfare on earth includes physical struggles and bloodshed, to the Christian on earth the most horrible battle is a spiritual one fought against forces *in the heavenly realms*: “our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers and authorities and cosmic powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil *in the heavenly realms*” (Eph 6:12). While Christ’s birth, death, and resurrection established peace between God in heaven and humanity on earth, that peace is now being contested by evil spiritual powers in heavenly realms who seek to sever the peace between God and people achieved by Christ. *The warfare in heaven must be interpreted as a spiritual struggle in which the dragon attempts to displace the Christ Child, the victorious Lamb who was slain, in order to establish himself again in the presence of God as the prince of the angels and as the one who has dominion over humanity on earth, and specifically as the one who has the authority to stand before God and accuse people for their sins.* (CC pp. 332-333)

At the center of this warfare in heaven is Satan’s ability to stand in God’s holy presence and accuse the saints of God (Rev 12:10). It is a war, so to speak, of words—the words with which Satan accused God’s saints of their sins (e.g., Job 1–2; Zech 3:1–5). With these words Satan claimed that he, not the Christ, truthfully represented the saints before God’s heavenly throne. This warfare, though of words, is deadly serious, for if Satan’s accusations were validated in the heavenly court, then God’s justice would require him to deny even his own people because of their sin. But for that to happen God would have to deny the claim of his own Son to be the rightful representative and advocate for God’s people. Christ’s victory has earned for him the right to represent fallen humanity; he is the one “who loves us and set us free from our sins by his blood” (Rev 1:5). Therefore the accusations of Satan are thrown out of court, and Satan himself is thrown out of heaven (12:8–10). Because of the rightful claim of Christ to represent God’s people with Christ’s own sinlessness and righteousness, the very presence of Satan in heaven was now an offense to God and all the heavenly host. (CC p. 333)

When did this war, this expulsion of the dragon and his evil host, take place? According to 12:5, it happened when the “Child was snatched up to God and to his throne,” that is, at the ascension of Christ. Apparently before Christ’s victory and ascension, the devil could at will stand before God and bring accusations against God’s saints. There are two well-known instances of this in the OT. In both Job (1:6–11; 2:1–5) and Zechariah (3:1–7), Satan stands before God’s heavenly presence to accuse two of his saints: Job and Joshua the high priest. From the original rebellion to Christ’s ascension, Satan could take his place in the council of angels before God in heaven (Job 1:6; 2:1; cf. Dan 7:7–8). But at Christ’s enthronement at the right of God, Satan was forever banished from God’s presence and his place in the heavenly court was taken from him. (CC pp. 333-334)

This war in heaven in Rev 12:7 is not the original rebellion of the devil against God, which took place before the fall of Adam and the woman (Gen 3:1). *The war and expulsion described in Revelation 12 happened as a result of Christ’s victory and elevation.* Not only is Satan judged, because of Christ’s triumphant return to his heavenly Father’s throne, Satan is now expelled and banished forever from God’s presence. And finally, at the End when Christ returns, Satan and all his fellow evil spirits will be cast forever into hell, the lake of fire (Rev 20:10; cf. 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6). The conclusion that the expulsion of Satan from heaven here in Revelation 12 is the result of Jesus’ ministry of redemption agrees with Jesus’ statement at the return of the seventy-two, when he said, “I was watching Satan falling like lightning from heaven” (Lk 10:18). Jesus also said, “Now the ruler of this world will be thrown out outside, and I, when I am lifted up from the world, will draw all people to myself” (Jn 12:31–32). (CC p. 336)

Michael. An archangel who defeats Satan in heavenly warfare. In Da 12:1 he is the protector of Israel who will deliver her from tribulation in the last days. (CSB)

Michael is similarly depicted as fighting for God’s people in Dn 10:13. (TLSB)

The war in heaven was concluded by “Michael and his angels” against “the dragon” and “his angels,” that is, it reached its climax when Michael cast the dragon out of heaven (12:7–9). This war, this casting of Satan out of heaven, took place as a result of Christ’s victory and at his ascension and session at the right of God (see 5:1–14). There was no room for two opposing advocates, each claiming to be the rightful representative of sinful humanity. No longer could God tolerate Satan’s presence since his accusations were rendered false by the victorious Lamb, who now returned to heaven. At the command of God, Michael and all the faithful angels drove out the dragon and his angels. The dragon and his hordes were not to take part in the celebration that ensued among the heavenly hosts—the celebration of Christ’s coronation at his ascension. Once the Messiah of God, the Savior and Champion of his people, had defeated the prince of darkness and had taken his seat at the right of God, the dragon was expelled by Michael. Now dethroned from his seat in the council of angels (see Job 1:6; Zech 3:1), the dragon could never again appear before God. (CC pp. 333-334)

In 12:7 Michael, while not called an “archangel,” is the captain of the host of angels engaged in the war with the dragon and his hosts. The verbal construction τοῦ πολεμῆσαι (“had to make war”) governed by the nominative forms ὁ Μιχαήλ (“Michael”) and the first οἱ ἄγγελοι (“the angels” of Michael) suggests that the war was at God’s command and that they “had to make war” because of the exaltation of the Christ Child before God in heaven. As a result of Christ’s victory on the cross and his public vindication over the dragon at his ascension and exaltation, there was no longer any room in heaven for the accuser. The dragon *had* to be thrown out of heaven, for Christ’s vicarious atonement and justification of the saints made Satan’s accusations false—lies—and an offense against God’s gracious justice in Christ. Once Christ was elevated

and enthroned, the slanderer was held in contempt of God's court and "was thrown out" (12:9), never again to appear before God's heavenly presence. (CC p. 335)

the dragon and his angels. Satan and his demonic cohorts. (TLSB)

12:9 *was thrown down to the earth.* Not the original casting of Satan out of heaven, but his final exclusion—an explanation of his intense hostility against God's people in the last days (vv. 12–17). (CSB)

The dragon did not want to leave his lofty place before God. But although he struggled to maintain his position, it was to no avail. At his expulsion the dragon is clearly identified to John: he is "the ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan" (12:9; cf. Gen 3:1–5; Mt 4:10; Lk 4:3). That is, he is *the* ancient and ever-present enemy of the human race, and in particular of God's holy people. (CC p. 335)

devil, and Satan. Reminds the reader that Satan first deceived Eve while disguised as a serpent (cf 2Co 11:3). "He led them away from God's outward Word to spiritualizing and self-pride [Genesis 3:2–5]" (SA III VIII 5). Because of that primeval deception, he is rightly called "the deceiver of the whole world." (TLSB)

The word "Satan" (ὁ Σατανᾶς) means "adversary" or "enemy," sometimes also "accuser." Likewise "devil" (διάβολος) means "slanderer" or "false accuser" (Jn 8:44), and true to his name he "deceives the entire inhabited [world]" (Rev 12:9). He and his host of evil angels are now confined to the earth and its sphere. (CC)

deceiver of the whole world. Cf. 2Co 11:3; see also Lk 22:31; Jn 13:2. (CSB)

"If you try to help yourself by your own thoughts and counsel, you will only make the matter worse and give the devil more space. For he has a serpent's head [Revelation 12:9]. If it finds an opening into which it can slip, the whole body will follow without stopping. But prayer can prevent him and drive him back" (LC III 111). (TLSB)

he was thrown. Though Michael and the angels help God's cause by waging war against Satan, the real cause of this enemy's defeat is "the blood of the Lamb," as v 11 makes clear. The decisive victory of Christ over Satan was won at the cross (Jn 12:3–33). (TLSB)

12:10 *loud voice* – "A great voice in heaven" now calls forth a declaration of victory and celebration, for "the accuser" of God's saints "has been thrown out" (Rev 12:10). The saints here are called "our brothers." Because of that designation, the "great voice" apparently is not that of an angel or one of the four winged creatures (e.g., 4:6–8; 6:1; 7:2). Most likely it is spoken by the twenty-four elders, since the elders represent OT Israel and the NT church (see 4:4, 10; 5:5; and the commentary on 4:4). If so, then the elders, together with all the saints in heaven and on earth, had to suffer the accusations of the devil as he stood before God, but now they suffer no longer. (CC p. 336)

In response the elders shout out their words of praise and celebration. The "great voice" declares, "Now has come about the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ" (12:10), that is, "the salvation, power, and kingdom of God are present realities." The victory was won on the cross (5:6; cf. Jn 12:31–32), and the completeness of that victory is demonstrated by the resurrection of the Christ for all to see and witness (Rev 1:17–18; cf. Acts 2:29–36). Now at the ascension and elevation of the Christ of God, that victory is fully displayed

and consummated in the heavens when the dragon is expelled and can never again stand before God's heavenly glory. The devil can never again bring accusations against the saints before the heavenly throne (see Rom 8:31–39). (CC p. 337)

kingdom of our God – The phrase “the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ” (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ, Rev 12:10) is similar to “the kingdom of the cosmos has become our Lord's and his Christ's (ἐγένετο ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ κόσμου τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ, 11:15). In 11:15 the total and cosmic comprehensiveness of “the kingdom” is emphasized. Here in 12:10 the sovereignty and power of that kingdom in its completeness is emphasized. “The authority” (ἡ ἐξουσία) of Jesus Christ is displayed now in all its power and grandeur at the expulsion of Satan. The Lord Jesus partially exercised and displayed some of this authority during in his earthly ministry, though not all recognized it (e.g., Mk 1:27; 2:10; 3:22–27). But now this “authority” of Christ is seen in all its consummating power, before which no enemy can stand and by which Christ completely exonerates his followers and the faith they have in him (cf. Phil 2:7–11). (CC p. 337)

accuser. † See Job 1:9–11; Zec 3:1. Satan in Hebrew means “accuser.” Millennialists should note that God's power is manifest not in the suppression of the ungodly, but in that Satan is no longer able to accuse God's people. (CSB)

Jb 1–2 provides the crucial background here. There, Satan is depicted as a prosecuting attorney in the heavenly court (cf Jb 1:6–11; 2:1–8). “Satan” means “adversary” in Hbr (as in a courtroom accuser). Similarly, the Gk term “devil” comes from a verb meaning “bring charges with hostile intent.” (TLSB)

thrown down. Now that Jesus has secured mankind's acquittal through His death and resurrection (Col 2:14), Satan is no longer allowed to bring charges against us. Luth: “When, I say, [Satan] comes to you and accuses you not only of failing to do anything good but of transgressing against the Law of God, then you must say: ‘You are troubling me with the memory of past sins; in addition, you are telling me that I have not done anything good. This does not concern me. For if I either trusted in my performance of good works or lost my trust because I failed to perform them, in either case Christ would be of no avail to me. Therefore whether you base your objections to me on my sins or on my good works, I do not care; for I put both of them out of sight and depend only on the freedom for which Christ has set me free’ ” (AE 27:11). (TLSB)

12:11 *by ... by.* † The Greek preposition means “because of.” (CSB)

blood of the Lamb. The Church's victory over Satan was achieved through the blood shed by Jesus on the cross (1Jn 1:7). (TLSB)

The saints of God, the followers of Christ, were not destroyed or condemned by God based on the accusations of the devil. Though tormented by his accusations because of their guilt over sins they had indeed committed, they never gave in to despair. For their faith was that their sins were washed away in the blood of the Lamb (see Rev 7:13–14). Now it becomes evident for all to see that the guilt of sin no longer clings to believers in Christ. And God's people had trusted that they were innocent despite the accusations of “the old evil foe.” They knew that truth because of the Word of promise to them (cf. Jn 17:15–17). “The blood of the Lamb” was the actual cause of their acquittal, and “the word of their witness” (Rev 12:11) was the result that testified to their victory in Christ. They gave “witness” to that truth of God's forgiveness because of the blood of the Lamb. They held to that witness even in the face of threats, suffering, and death (see 2:10, 13;

3:10–12). Their faith was their victory because they held firmly to the victorious Christ (1 Jn 5:4–5). And for that victory in faith they were not afraid to die. Thus they were a living demonstration of Jesus’ words: “The one who loves his life loses it, but the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (Jn 12:25; cf. Mt 10:39; Mk 8:35). (CC pp. 337-338)

the word of their testimony.† The gospel (cf. Ac 1:8; 1Jn 5:10; Lk 24:46–47). (CSB)

Though Jesus’ death is the effective cause of salvation, the Gospel testimony is the means by which this deliverance is received and spread. (TLSB)

12:12 *rejoice O heavens* – The “great voice” (Rev 12:10) then calls upon the very “heavens” themselves and all “those who dwell in them” to “break out in celebration” (12:12)! At various times the heavens were invoked to hear and to testify to God’s words and promises (e.g., Deut 32:1; Ps 19:1 [MT 19:2]; Is 1:2). Now they praise God for the fulfillment of those words and promises. The angels are invited to rejoice with the elders and all the people of God. Though the angels are not the recipients of the saving victory of Christ, they, nevertheless, celebrate with the followers of the Lamb (cf. Rev 5:11–14). They also celebrate because their Lord, the Christ of God, has returned triumphantly to claim his rightful seat at God’s right in the council of angels. (CC p. 338)

his time is short.† The period of final, intense hostility of Satan toward the people of God (cf. 20:3). While Satan has lost his power to accuse, he has not yet been cast into the lake of sulfur (20:10). (CSB)

Until his final banishment in hell (20:10), the devil will spare no effort in attacking the faithful (cf 12:17). As he nears the end of his run, the devil’s attacks will become increasingly furious (cf 20:7–10). (TLSB)

The “great voice” (12:10) also cries out, “Woe to the earth and to the sea, because the devil has come down to you” (12:12)! He has been thrown out of heaven and is now confined to the earth and sea, and he will attack its inhabitants in his evil designs of destruction. No longer able to vent his hatred or plot evil against the Christ of God, and no longer able to express his hatred and cunning craft in lies before God concerning God’s saints, he takes out his fury on the human race and life on earth. The dragon also knows “that he has but a short time” (12:12) to attempt the destruction of God’s creation. The End is soon to come, and then the dragon will be forever separated from all of God’s creation. And so the devil “sets to work at once with redoubled zeal, goaded by his defeat.” And this “short time” of his activity “is the time of unprecedented peril” in which the church lives, from Christ’s ascension to the end of this world when Christ returns. (CC pp. 338-339)

12:13–16† Cf. the similarity to the exodus. The scene at this point once more shifts back to the earth, picking up from v. 6. (CSB)

12:13 *he pursued the woman* – Because Satan can no longer engage the resurrected and ascended Christ directly (vv 5, 9), he makes the Church (v 1) the object of his assaults. (TLSB)

The dragon vents his anger and evil designs especially against the woman, the church, the bride of the exalted Christ. While the devil, as “the angel of the abyss” (9:11), assails the entire human race (as depicted in 9:1–11), it is the woman who is the focus of his intense warfare. In particular he hates the woman because she gave birth to the Child, and now he vents his hatred of the Child

upon the woman, the church, because she puts her trust and life into the care of Christ and refuses to worship and serve the dragon. (CC p. 339)

The woman's suffering, caused by the dragon, may be part of the reason why the martyred saints under the altar in heaven prayed that God would soon avenge their blood by punishing those (or the one – Satan) who had persecuted and slaughtered them (6:9-11). Similarly here in 12:12 the elders before God's throne in heaven cry out their woe to the earth, for they realize what sufferings God's saints on earth now experience. (CC p. 339)

12:14 *wings of a great eagle.*† Signify God's care and concern for his people (cf. Ex 19:4; Ps 91:4; Mt 23:37). The church receives divine help against the wiles of the devil. (CSB)

The woman is cared for by God and is protected so that she will not be destroyed. The metaphorical imagery of this godly care, "the two wings of the great eagle" (12:14), is reminiscent of the care by which God succored the people of Israel in their wilderness pilgrimage: in Ex 19:4 the Lord God reminds the people of Israel, "I carried you on eagles' wings, and I brought you to myself" (see also Is 40:31). In his farewell address Moses reminded the people how God found them in the barren wasteland of the desert and how he protected and cared for them "as an eagle stirs up its nest, hovering over its young" (Deut 32:10–11). And the psalmist declares that God saves his people from danger: "with his feathers he encloses you, and under his wings you find refuge" (Ps 91:4). The woman, the church of Christ, like Israel of old, is now on a desert pilgrimage here on earth as the devil hunts her down, causing her all manner of fear and suffering and depredation. God's loving care, however, will sustain her through it to the promised land. (CC p. 339)

The woman's escape (v 6) is finally described. *wings of the great eagle.* Recalls the protection God provided for Israel during the desert wandering. (TLSB)

a time, times and half a time. One year plus two years plus half a year. (CSB)

The length of time of her fear and anxiety in the wilderness is given as "a time and times and half a time" (Rev 12:14). This time period of the woman's suffering probably represents three and a half years and is equivalent to the "forty-two months" in 11:2, when the holy city of God will be trampled underfoot by the pagan nations; to the 1,260 days in 11:3 during which the two witnesses of God will carry out their prophetic ministry; and to the 1,260 days in 12:6, during which the woman is sustained in the place prepared for her in the desert. The time period symbolized by these three equivalent expressions ("a time and times and half a time"; forty-two months; and 1,260 days) is the time between the ascension of Christ and the end of this world at his return. A model and type for it is the wilderness sojourn of the children of Israel, forty-two years in total when the time from the first Passover to the stay at Mt. Sinai is added to the subsequent forty years of wandering in the desert. The fact that the dragon is referred to as "the serpent" (ὁ ὄφις, 12:14–15) indicates that in the dragon's warfare against the woman, the most dangerous onslaught against her will be the temptation to leave the truth of Christ in the quest to become her own god in wisdom and saving care—the same temptation by which the serpent successfully lured Eve and Adam (Gen 3:1–6). This suggests that the most severe suffering caused by the dragon will be of a spiritual nature, in particular the temptation and pressure to commit the sin of apostasy (see Eph 6:12; Rev 2:12–14). (CC pp. 339-340)

1:15-16 Another allusion to the exodus and period of desert wandering, specifically the account of Korah's rebellion (Nu 16:31–34). (TLSB)

12:15 *poured water like a river...to sweep her away* – Though God cares for the woman by hindering and restraining the serpent, nevertheless the serpent causes her much anxiety and pain. “The serpent spewed out of his mouth” a raging flood of “water like a river” in order to drown the woman (12:15). In great terror the woman cries out, and God hears her cry and responds by causing the earth to swallow the river. The people of God have always been confronted by the dragon and the fear of being overwhelmed by the torrents and raging floods of evil (see, e.g., Pss 18:4–5 [MT 18:5–6]; 32:4–7). But God always hears the cries of his endangered and fearful people. In Ps 124:2–5 the psalmist declares that if God had not been by his side when the torrents and the floods of evil had engulfed him, he would have perished. And in Is 43:1–2 the prophet hears the promise of God that when he would travel through waters and rushing rivers, they will not sweep him away, for the Lord God, his Redeemer, would be with him (cf. Ps 18:6 [MT 18:7]). One may also recall how God stopped the flow of the Jordan River so that his people could cross on dry land (Joshua 3), as well as the crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 14–15) and the universal flood (Genesis 6–9), during which God protected Noah and his family, typifying Holy Baptism (1 Pet 3:20–21). (CC p. 340)

12:16 *earth came help ... opened its mouth.* In Nu 16:30–33 the earth opened and swallowed Korah’s men. (CSB)

The earth swallows the water. This brings to mind how the earth opened its mouth in God’s service to swallow up Korah and those with him in his rebellion against Moses (Num 16:1–3, 28–34). Moses had said that if those rebels should die a natural death, that would confirm that Korah was right in his opposition. But if the earth miraculously split open and swallowed Korah and those with him, then all the people of Israel would know that Korah was really opposing God. In this manner God delivered the faithful Israelites from the sin of apostasy. The use of such imagery here in Rev 12:16 suggests that, if necessary, God will rescue and defend his people from the onslaughts of the evil one even through miraculous events (cf. 11:5–6). Rebels may oppose God and usurp the authority of those properly called to shepherd God’s flock, and such schisms may lead some of the flock astray, but the church will be preserved by grace and ultimately the schismatics will be put to shame. (CC p. 340)

12:17 *rest of her offspring.*† Believers in general as contrasted with Christ (the male child of vv. 5, 13) and the church as an organism (the woman). (CSB)

Satan continually makes war against all who believe and live according to the Law (“the commandments”) and the Gospel (“the testimony of Jesus”). (TLSB)

Since even the earth takes part in God’s work of protection, the dragon becomes even more furious that he cannot destroy the woman. So now he focuses his attention on “the rest of her seed,” her children (12:17). The dragon could not destroy the Christ Child. He could not destroy the woman, the church. So he attempts to destroy her seed, at least some of them. Swete says, “If he can neither unseat the Throned Christ nor destroy the Church, yet individual Christians may enjoy no such immunity.” So the devil “went away to make war” with her children, “those who are keeping the commandments of God and who hold the witness of Jesus” (12:17). This description of her children, who are the individual members of the church, indicates that despite the dragon’s attempt to destroy the church and the dire threats of annihilation, many tenaciously hold to their faith. Still, individual Christians become the targets of the dragon’s desperate designs by which some, at least, *could* be destroyed. (CC pp. 340-341)

The next stage in the dragon's warfare against the children of the woman is to stand at the edge of the sea, the place of chaos and evil. He will first conjure up the beast from the sea (13:1) and then the beast from the earth (13:11). With these two beasts and what they represent, the dragon will carry on his evil war against the members of Christ's church. The two beasts under the control and inspiration of the dragon will be the cause of all the tribulations and sufferings that the church and her children will endure throughout the remainder of the message of Revelation. (CC)

Quotes from Leonard Sweet's book, "SoulTsunami" on the apathy and hostility toward Christianity at this time in history.

"In Sandra Loh's novel, 'Death Takes a Holiday,' evangelism is equated with sexual abuse and body violation." PP 47-48

"A recent Oxford publication puts the Christian dilemma in sharp relief. Ian S. Markham compiled for Oxford, 'A World Religions Reader.' Claiming to present each tradition in the best possible light, the author does so for every non-Christian tradition. But Christianity fares badly. His first chapter on Christianity is on secular humanism, which rejects all religion. His testimonies about Christianity are from lapsed believers who have rejected the Christian faith. His treatment of Christianity's treatment of women stresses Thomas Aquinas' negativity, while Islam's attitude toward women is stressed positively (nothing about polygamy, wearing the veil, opposition to divorce, etc.)." p. 48

"Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates Jr., in his 'New Yorker' article on 'Hating Hillary,' admits that he is religious himself but tries to keep quiet about it because at Harvard spirituality is considered one of those conditions that suggest some lapse of hygiene of those afflicted, as with worms or lice." P. 48

"Islam is the world's fastest growing religion of the 21st century. While Western Christianity accounted for 26.9% of the world's population in 1900 and peaked at about 30% in 1980, the Muslim population increased from 12.4% in 1900 to as much as 18% in 1980 with well over 1 billion adherents by the mid-1990's. The percentage of Christians in the world will probably decline to about 25% by 2025, the slack largely taken up by Muslims. Muslims are already poised to outnumber Jews in the United States and become the nation's second-largest faith by 2010." pp. 56-57

"US News & World Report, Time, Newsweek consistently choose the holiest Christian week of the year to present cover stories raising questions about what can be believed in the gospels and explore whether or not Jesus did what the Bible says he did." P.52

Other items...

New York City schools allowed Muslims an area to pray during Ramadan but allowed no language that talked about Christmas. Ft. Wayne Newspaper

The television channel "A&E" makes available (without cost to schools) educational programs about the Dalai Lama.

Early Childhood teachers in the Indiana District report that many of the parents of their students don't know the Christmas and Easter Bible stories.

testimony of Jesus.† The testimony that Jesus bore (cf. 1:2, 9; 19:10). That is the gospel message “God has given about his Son” (1Jn 5:10). (CSB)

12:7–17 John depicts the cosmic struggle between the forces of good and of evil, and the damage it continually threatens to inflict upon the Church. This depiction makes clear that although Satan cannot overcome the Church, he nonetheless tries his hardest to drag down with him as many as possible. It is most comforting to know, therefore, that Jesus has already defeated Satan and forgiven our sins, so that we can never be lost. • We thank You, Lord God, for giving us the victory over the devil through Your Son, Jesus. We draw strength from the protection You grant to us and all Christians during our spiritual warfare. Amen.