

# The War In Heaven And On Earth

## Revelation 12 Notes

### ***The Woman, The Dragon And The Man Child (vss. 1-6)***

- The woman is arrayed with the total of divinely-revealed light of the three dispensations -- the Patriarchal (starlit), Mosaic (moonlit) and Christian (sunlit). Under Christ, through the apostles, God revealed truth in its entirety. As the redeemed of the ages, the woman of John's vision is thus clothed with the totality of the revealed will and truth of God. Although there are several views of her identity, she is probably the spiritual remnant of God's people who, in faithfulness, had kept the covenant with Him (cf. Micah 4:10). After bearing the man child she came to represent all of God's people.
- The promise of God and the hope of a Messiah, a redeemer, had been in the womb of the faithful remnant since Genesis 3. Symbolized as a woman arrayed in light, the faithful had cried out, longing to be delivered of Him (Christ) whom she would bear.
- The dragon is clearly identified as the devil and Satan, the old serpent (vs. 9). The dragon symbol describes Satan's ferocious nature, "great" denotes his power and influence, while his color emphasizes his murderous character (John 8:44). His ten horns symbolize fullness of power within his realm of operation. The diadems are symbolic of royalty in the realm of evil.
- Although there are a few different interpretations of vs. 4, all of them lead to this conclusion: the great power of Satan is stressed. His ability to lead angels to their destruction should be a warning of his subtle cunning by which he can cast down God's saints. At this point, the dragon is more concerned with the one about to be born than with the woman and her seed who might yet come.
- As one considers vs. 5, one is not to think of Mary and Bethlehem, but of the entire period from the child's birth until He ascended to heaven, where He sat down on the right hand of God, sharing the throne with His Father (3:21; 5:6). The whole experience from birth to coronation is contemplated in the few words of this verse.
- The woman is revealed in the fuller role of God's spiritual Israel, the church. Since the redeemed have come to Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22), the woman who now goes into the wilderness as the church, the new spiritual Zion, symbolizes all of God's redeemed people. Now that her child is caught up to God, the woman flees into the wilderness, a place of safety provided for her. As Israel was nurtured in the wilderness with manna from

God, so now the new spiritual Israel is nurtured by the true bread which came down from heaven (John 6:50).

### ***The Great Spiritual War (vss. 7-12)***

- Before continuing with the fortunes of the woman, John is shown a vision of a great spiritual conflict in which Satan and his forces are cast down to the earth. The dragon is no longer great or ferocious or apparently invincible; he is actually a defeated foe. One is not to think of an actual war in heaven, but of such a war seen in the vision, intended to teach some great spiritual truth. In the conflict Satan is defeated and cast down from his high-handed control over men.
- The great dragon is called "the serpent," identifying him with the serpent in Eden, through whom sin was introduced into the world, and who has been the active enemy of God and man throughout the ages. The war resulted in Satan and his angels being cast down to the earth where he operates in the world of the unregenerate. This symbolizes a spiritual warfare which had been going on from the beginning, but reaches its climax in Christ's victory over Satan.
- God's purpose of providing salvation, of demonstrating His great power and the establishing of His spiritual kingdom, all promised through the prophets, "is now come," that is, His word is fulfilled. The salvation long hoped for was now provided; the power of God over Satan, sin and death had now been demonstrated; and the kingdom of promise was now a reality.
- John points to three means of the saint's victory: the blood of the Lamb, the saint's response and the spirit of a martyr. The cross of Christ, where His blood was poured out, was a victory through which God's power was demonstrated. Also, the saints held fast the word of their testimony. Finally, although they may never be called upon to die for Christ, they nevertheless must be willing to die for Him if called upon.
- The heavens rejoice because of the Lamb's triumph over the dragon, thus providing for the victory of the saints. The earth and the sea become the field of Satan's activity. They must bear the effects of Satan's wrath. The dragon is furious at his defeat, for he knows that he has only a short time.

### ***Persecution Of The Woman (vss. 13-17)***

- Since the man child is beyond Satan's power to attack, the dragon seeks to hurt the child by persecuting the woman who gave Him birth. This further confirms the view that the woman is spiritual Zion, the sum of God's people. Satan did not carry his war to the Jewish nation, nor to the Jewish remnant that had kept faith with

God under the Old Covenant, but to the new spiritual Zion, the church.

- The serpent is no match for the Lord, whose power has been demonstrated in the conflict revealed above; and now by that same power the Lord comes to the rescue of the woman. The interpretation of this part of the vision is similar to the deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Exodus 19:4; 23:20; Psalm 36:7; Isaiah 40:31). The Lord delivers, protects and provides for His own; there is no point of weakness or failure on His part.
- The idea of floods threatening to engulf God's people was not new (Isaiah 8:5-8; 42:2; Psalm 144:7; 32:6). Now the serpent tried to sweep the woman away by the river that issued out of his mouth: delusions in the form of lies, false impressions of invincible power, false religious teachings, false philosophies, false charges and malicious reports intended to destroy the church. To these he would add the seductive temptations of lust. The church has withstood the assault of the serpent because a way has been provided for her deliverance.
- The earth, the unregenerated earth-dwellers, helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the lies of the dragon. In doing this the earth established a clear distinction between the world, satiated with its false religions and philosophical teachers, on the one hand, and the church, clothed with truth and righteousness, on the other. From the viewpoint of Satan and the world, the earth's help was incidental and unintentional; but from the viewpoint of the church, it was providential.
- Infuriated by his defeats, the dragon turned on the woman's seed to do battle with them. "The remnant of her seed" are the saints (Romans 8:29; Hebrews 2:11). They come under the destructive wrath of the dragon, but they are assured of victory in Christ.