

**THE COMING OF THE LORD
THE PERSECUTION OF ISRAEL
REVELATION 12:1-6**

Introduction:

This is a chapter of great controversy. Many stumble here and fall into the trap of false doctrine. A person's interpretation of the whole book hinges on what they believe about this particular passage of Scripture. As always, we will interpret the Scriptures in a way that allows them to speak for themselves.

Notice the word "*wonder*", it means "*a sign, an unusual event worthy of special notice.*"

Something very strange is going on here. The vision that John is seeing is partly past and partly future. Let's spend a few minutes looking into these verses and notice some *wonders* in Heaven.

In Chapters 12-14 of the book of Revelation, the major characters of the tribulation time are introduced here in what is another parenthetical section ending at 14:20.

These are seven in number:

- 1) The woman. (Israel)
- 2) The dragon. (Satan)
- 3) The man-child. (Jesus Christ)
- 4) Michael, representing the angels.
- 5) The remnant seed of the woman.
- 6) The beast out of the sea, the world dictator.
- 7) The beast out of the earth, the false prophet and religious leader of the world.

Around these main characters swirls the tremendously moving scene of the Great Tribulation. First to be introduced is the woman.

I. THE FIRST GREAT WONDER, THE WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN: ISRAEL. (12:1-2)

Though this sign is seen in heaven, it apparently portrays a reality on the earth, for subsequently the woman pictured is persecuted by Satan in the Great Tribulation.

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She has been variously misinterpreted as: The Virgin Mary, The Church, and many female cult leaders and even some women preachers have tried to set themselves as this woman.

The woman does not represent any of these, but rather Israel as the matrix from which the Lord Jesus Christ came.

By contrast, there are other representative women who are mentioned in the book of the Revelation.

1. Jezebel in 2:20 was representative of false religion as a system.
2. The harlot in 17:1-7, 15-18, is the apostate church.
3. The bride, the Lamb's wife in 19:7, the Church joined to Christ in glory.

In the Old Testament, Israel frequently is presented as the **wife** of Jehovah, often in her character as being unfaithful to her husband.

The description of the woman as clothed with the sun and the moon is an allusion to Genesis 37:9-11, where these heavenly bodies represent Jacob and Rachel, thereby identifying the woman with the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.

In the same context, the **stars** represent the patriarchs, the sons of Jacob.

The identification of the woman as being Israel is supported by the evidence from this chapter.

1. Israel is obviously the source from which have come many of the blessings of God including:
 - a. The Bible.

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- b. Christ.
 - c. The Apostles.
2. The twelve stars seem to refer to the twelve tribes.
3. The persecution of the woman coincides with the persecution of Israel.

II. THE GREAT RED DRAGON: SATAN. (12:3-4)

The second great sign appearing in heaven is described as a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns upon his heads.

From the similar description given in **13:1** and the parallel reference in **Daniel 7:7-8, 24**, it is clear that the revived Roman Empire is in view.

Satan, however, is called the dragon later in **12:9**, and it is clear that the dragon is both the empire and the representation of satanic power.

The color red may indicate his murderous characteristics.

The seven heads and ten horns refer to the original ten kingdoms of which three were subdued by the little horn of Daniel 7:8, who is to be identified with the world ruler of the Great Tribulation who reigns over the revived Roman Empire.

The tail of the dragon is declared to draw a third part of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. This speaks of the fall of Lucifer (Isaiah 14) who persuaded 1/3 of the angels in Heaven to follow him.

We know that Satan has, from the outset of creation, tried to destroy Christ. (*Genesis 3:15*- The "*seed of the woman*" is a reference to Christ.)

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Like a vicious dragon he has been on the prowl to destroy the Lord. The Old Testament reveals the trail of blood that was shed to keep the Lord from being born in the first place.

1. The murder of Abel, a righteous man, by Cain his brother.
2. The corruption of the human race in Genesis 6.
3. The attempt to cut off the Hebrew nation in Egypt and by the destruction of Hebrew baby boys in Exodus 1, 2. It is interesting that Pharaoh is called a dragon in Ezekiel 29:3—*“Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself.”*
4. By the invasion and captivity of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar is compared to a dragon in Jeremiah 51:34—*“Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon, he hath filled his belly with my delicates, he hath cast me out.”*
5. By the decree of Haman to have the Jews wiped out in the Persian empire. (The Book of Esther)

Also, several times in the life of Christ we see that Satan tried to destroy Him.

1. Herod’s decree to kill the babies two and under in Bethlehem. (Matthew 2:16-18)

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2. The temptation by Satan to get Christ to jump off the pinnacle of the Temple. (Matthew 4:5-7)
3. The storm on the sea of Galilee. (Matthew 8:24-27)
4. When Satan tried to use the people of Nazareth to kill Jesus. (Luke 4:28-30)
5. The Cross of Calvary.
But, thank God He arose from the grave and lives forever more.

Death could not destroy Him!

Hebrews 2:14-15—“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; 15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

Satan is out to destroy us too! **1 Peter 5:8** says that Satan roams the earth like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

The conflict with Christ continues!

III. THE MAN-CHILD: CHRIST. (12:5-6)

The woman identified as Israel in verses 1 and 2 is said in verse 5 to bring forth a man-child who is destined to rule all nations with a rod of iron.

Psalms 2:9 is a prophecy related to Christ and says “*Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.*”

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The catching up of the man-child to God and to His throne is a portrayal of the ascension of Christ.

Acts 1:9-11—“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”

This is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ!

Attention is then directed back to the mother of the child in vs 6.

Here she is seen in the time of great tribulation as fleeing into the wilderness to a place prepared of God.

For 1260 days (3 ½ years) she is cared for.

There is obviously a tremendous time lapse between verses 5 and 6, but this is not an uncommon occurrence in prophecy.

The first and second comings of Christ are frequently spoken of in the same sentence in Scripture.

Inasmuch as Israel is in comparative tranquillity and safety in the first three and one-half years of Daniel’s seventieth week (Daniel 9:27), the reference must be to the preservation of a portion of the nation of Israel through the great tribulation to await the second coming of Christ.

God has prepared a place for Israel to flee to where they can find provisions for 3 ½ years. For the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation the Jews will need to hide. Why?

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1. **World sentiment will become hardened against the Jews.**
Zechariah 12:3—“And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.”

2. **The Anti-Christ will break his treaty with the Jews.**
The Jews make a seven-year covenant with the Anti-Christ. It appears that they will give up territory and their defenses for peace.

The Jews are allowed to construct their Temple for worship on the Temple Mount. But then the treaty is broken in the midst of the seven years.

The Anti-Christ goes into the Holy of Holies in the Temple and declares himself to be God and the Jews reject him.

So the remnant that escape will need God’s protection and God leads them into the wilderness to a place that he has prepared to sustain them.

Conclusion

These events that we are talking about are just around the corner.

The Lord is going to return one day soon. I wonder, are you ready for the Lord to come back? How about your loved ones—family, friends, co-workers, neighbors?

We need to be sharing Jesus with others so they will be ready too!