

## Chapter 12

### The Woman, the Child, and the Dragon

**12** Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. <sup>2</sup> Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.

It's not tremendously important to know if this chapter follows seamlessly from the last one or not and there is some ambiguity in the text. John's intention here is to give his interpretation of what those 1,260 days that the 2 witnesses were testifying were. He has read Daniel's explanation but it his chance to add to it. That is the point of Chapter 12.

In the NKJV as we have here, the chapter opens with the word "Now". In the Greek, as we have it, the word is 'Kai', a conjunctive word better translated 'And'. Both would lead you to believe John is saying something like "the next thing I saw was..." Owing to the nature of this chapter and how it treats its subject matter, there is no point is trying to work out if it is a chapter 4 style "And now we'll move into another area" or a chapter 11 style "following on". This seems to have been a debate which I simply want to say is pointless.

John looks and sees a woman clothed with the sun – that is surrounded by light – with the moon under her feet and a wreath of 12 stars on her head, pregnant and about to give birth. A rather interesting sight. We will interrogate these symbols after we dig in a little more.

<sup>3</sup> And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. <sup>4</sup> His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. <sup>5</sup> She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. <sup>6</sup> Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

NB: It's important to note here that the use of the word Dragon here and Serpent later is interchangeable. The differences are merely in English translation.

John looks and sees a second, dramatic sight. A big, red dragon that has 7 heads and 10 horns, 7 crowns that grabbed 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the stars of heaven before it went to eat the pregnant woman. The pregnant woman then gives birth to "a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron" before he was taken to heaven to be with God and his throne. The woman then escaped, to a place prepared for her for 1,260 days.

The collection of symbols looks a bit mixed at first, but when we use what we already know, we can decode these rather easy.

Firstly, the child can only be one person; it must be Christ. In Chapter 2:27, Jesus was said to have "power over the nations 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron" and "when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3). Nobody else rules/d all the nations and was caught up to God's Throne to share it with him. God the Father, in Hebrews, gave Jesus the dignity of sharing his position, "For to which of the angels did He ever say... Your throne, O God, is forever and ever"? (Hebrews 1:5,8). There is literally no other contender that could be this child, it can only be Jesus.

So, having established that, we can bring the woman into it. The woman gives birth to the male child can only be the group that Jesus was associated with before he was born – namely the Jewish Nation, the saved peoples. This makes a lot of sense.

She is "clothed with the sun", as the Jewish Nation was clothed with the glory of God, "with the moon under her feet". The Moon reflects the sun, so the nation is standing on a 'lesser light' that would reflect Gods Glory. That would easily relate to a number of elements, namely the Mosaic texts that were the instructions that ruled the nation and gave them the authority of the covenant relationship. It could also relate to their experiences being a fallible nation or it could be a reflection of the Temple that reflected the Heavenly temple. Several different options all fit. Finally, "on her head a garland of twelve stars" representing the 12 Tribes of Israel. The elements that make her up fit nicely.

The Dragon then that's standing by would have to relate to the power that was there when Jesus was born; the Roman Empire. The symbolism here is related to that in Daniel 7, but there are some interpretations and some changes. Other than the number of heads – which Daniel does not include - the biggest change is that where Daniel could not describe the beast, John clearly calls it a 'Dragon'.

Revelation 12	Daniel 7
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great fiery red dragon seven heads with seven diadems ten horns	dreadful and terrible exceedingly strong huge iron teeth highly aggressive ten horns
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Today we consider Dragons to be mythical creatures, but they seem to have appeared in almost every culture from very early times. It's possible that stories from before the flood were passed down of them but we don't know, all we know is there are no samples in the modern record outside of Fiction. Dragons have several qualities no matter where you find them that match Daniel's description of this great beast;

- physically exceptionally large
- extremely tough skin
- large teeth
- wings
- horns
- four-legs
- spiked tail
- capable of breathing fire

Daniel does not describe all these qualities but to say he is referring to a dragon would not be to step too far away from his text. His symbol, for the most part, also matches up with John's description with the exception of the 7 Heads. It certainly seems unusual that Daniel would leave out the extra heads considering his other references, but here he was focussing his attention on the horns and, as the old adage goes; "absence of evidence is not evidence of absence" (Martin Rees). The weight of evidence, 2 very aggressive, large and viscous beasts with 10 horns would easily indicate they are the same thing. Furthermore, as stated, the Dragon is the beast that was trying to take down the Child and destroy the Jewish Nation at its will.

So what are these 7 heads? The City of Rome famously sat on 7 hills – it has since grown FAR larger – and was surrounded by the boundaries of sacred Rome, the Pomerium. Within that area, no weapons could be carried and many formal positions, like that of being a military commander, had to be surrendered before entering. The only time that they were permitted to march through with weapons was when a general was given the honour of a Triumph. When Rome was originally established by Romulus and Remus, different groups established themselves on each of the 7 hills and experienced both conflict and mutual support to get the city to the place where it was an important one. The original city of Rome was founded on the Palatine Hill on April 21, 753 BC but the marshland and swamps around Rome were drained and made habitable by all 7 groups working together. In this way, the 7 Crowns can be seen as the 7 original groups cooperating to build Rome.

Rome did have a king early in its history, but it always had a senate that represented the people. Originally, this was certainly an aristocratic body, established by the King who was the only person that could name people to it, but nevertheless, from its earliest days, representatives were a part of Roman culture and the 7 Heads would fit this bill.

Whether we take this to mean this is the same beast that Daniel saw, or we say that this is a new beast, we cannot deny that this is Rome. There can be no alternative if the baby is Jesus considering who was the world power at his birth.

The use of the 'Dragon' as a symbol is, however, an important change as the Dragon has always been used to represent Satan or any power that Satan puts to use. Being the king of the evil beasts with no redeeming features whatsoever, the Dragon has always been the epitome of Evil in all possible ways. Here, we know that the Dragon represents Rome and it cannot be denied that this power was objectively evil, putting Jesus to death for a start and when one considers all the atrocities that the Roman Empire paid out to conquered lands. We have discussed the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple already.

To review then, the woman comes forth pregnant and we recognise this to be the Jewish Nation prior to the incarnation of Jesus. She gives birth and the dragon goes to kill her child; but He, Christ, is taken to Heaven and given power and authority. Then the woman flees into the wilderness where a place was prepared for her for 1,260 days.

## **Satan Thrown Out of Heaven**

<sup>7</sup> And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, <sup>8</sup> but they <sup>1a</sup> did not prevail, nor was a place found for <sup>1b</sup> them in heaven any longer. <sup>9</sup> So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

John feels the need to explain who the Dragon is, so he takes a step back and explains it with this little history jaunt. While telling the story, John pauses here to say "I've told you about the actions of a dragon but I need to step back and explain who the dragon is".

He does that by talking about war in heaven, an incredible phrase. “[And war broke out in heaven](#)”. It seems an impossible concept and much debate has centred on what this war looked like. We will not go into it in depth here, except to explain that it was a war for the hearts and minds of the universe, a concept that will be expanded on when we look at chapter 16.

Michael, who we have already identified with Christ, and his supporters fought against the Dragon and his supporters. There is only one person that this dragon can be; Satan nee Lucifer. His name is somewhat important as he was created as Lucifer – the light bringer – and changed his name to Satan after the expulsion and fall. To refer to him as Lucifer today is a technical insult, especially in the pro-PC culture of our world. At the conclusion of the Battle, the dragon was kicked out of heaven along with his supporters and he is presented as the one who’s intention is to “[deceive\(s\) the whole world](#)”.

John’s point here is that the dragon who sought to kill both the woman and her divine child could be equated with Satan himself. Rome fits this bill clearly. A pagan state that attempted to kill Jesus as soon as he was born, suppressed and oppressed both the Jews and then Christians, and ultimately was the power that put Jesus to death. The power that, as we saw in Chapters 2 and 3, had periodic periods of persecution of Christians but would ultimately become a Christian power itself.

This connection also reinforces our identification of the Roman Catholic Church as the power persecuting protestants and Jews. The 1260 days as established by Daniel and discussed *ad nauseum* are here connected directly to Satan as a power. There can be no doubt whatsoever that this persecuting power here trying to gobble up the woman’s child is Rome.

As a side note, this is why Rome is often given 2 names to distinguish it. ‘Pagan Rome’ is the Roman Republic and Empire that predates the Christian church, while ‘Papal Rome’ arose after it. There seems little unity amongst scholars about the transition between the two, but any date between Milvian Bridge in 312 and 538 can be selected. I tend to favour the latter as it is when Papal Superiority was certified but am not fixed to this point.

The references in Revelation throughout to a ‘Dragon’ can be equally applied to Satan or anyone that he has control over.

<sup>10</sup> Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. <sup>11</sup> And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. <sup>12</sup> Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."

John connects the Heavenly story with the earthly by invoking God's words. "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down." This statement can be equally applied to the expulsion of the Devil from Heaven by Michael, and the destruction of the Roman Church's earthly power by Berthier at the end of the 1,260 days. John equates these two events in his own way.

After Satan was kicked out of Heaven, he could bring little new influence on the Angels and other heavenly beings as we understand of the story of the fall. We are led to understand, through Mrs White, that the Serpent could only tempt Adam and Eve on the Tree of Knowledge which was the tree used to test. She also says in Early Writings that this tree was not unique to Earth. In the same book she discusses the implementation of a 'Golden Card' which was established after Christ's death that permits Angels access to heaven – implying that Satan's followers no longer have access. As we read in Jude and Job, Satan himself had access back to Heaven and discussed Job and Moses with Christ after he was expelled and after the fall. His access was revoked when Christ died and it is theorised amongst some biblical scholars that salvation was offered to Satan as well as his forces right up to that moment, but not beyond it. The covenant was then extended only to Humans. This is an area that needs its own, multi part study and contains much conjecture so I will leave it there.

The connection between the end of the 1,260 days and Satan's expulsion is warranted as, from 1798 on, the Roman church ceased to be a persecuting power and it has only been in the very modern age that its influence has been recovered. This connection is reinforced by John's next line; "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb..." The war in Heaven was not won, nor even impacted by Christ's death on the cross – indeed the inverse is true. Jesus death on the cross is the result of the War in Heaven. Had God forgiven the traitors or exterminated them in a flash, there would be no need for the Lamb to give his blood. Jesus blood is a result of the war in Heaven, not the means of Victory – however those who remained true to Jesus during the 1,260 days did so because of their trust in his blood, and "by the word of

their testimony". They knew their truth about what had come before – the Jewish Law and the truth of Christ's experiences on Earth, and they stuck it out with them. Indeed, the proselytising groups who stood against Rome during this time knew the consequences of their actions and truly "did not love their lives to the death" as they knew a better world waited them after a long sleep.

John seamlessly connects the events in Heaven to the Roman persecution but then gives the warning that "the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time." John indicates that Satan, seeing his great power destroyed, becomes exceptionally angry with the Holy ones, because he recognises that his end is near. It is almost as if he has realised that the destruction of this Church hails his own doom and he must now prepare his forces for the end. He, now, really and truly has nothing to lose and will assault the Saints with everything he has to exterminate them.

To prove this point, John goes back to the Woman in the wilderness.

## The Woman Persecuted

<sup>13</sup> Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. <sup>14</sup> But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.

John returns to the story. After Christ's birth, we are told that the "woman" continues persecution, but is taken to a safe place where she can be protected and kept strong for the "time and times and half a time" we have looked at ad nauseum.

The Seventh-Day Adventist church has been known as "New-Testament" or "New-Covenant" Jews. This is the part of the bible from which those names come, for it is clear that the Christian Church did not produce Jesus, although the Jews did not exist shortly after Jesus' death and resurrection. The woman is, in fact, the continuation of the Jewish peoples who "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ", that is those who exemplify the pre-Christian Jewish faith and retain a respect for the original covenant but are conscious that they live under a new one.

The major element of this respect for the first covenant, that which divides those who hold the truth from those who have fallen to the dragon, we have discussed in depth during our review of the 144,000 in Revelation 7; namely the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment. The

Sabbath truth was the prized commandment shared by both Jews and the Christians who held out against persecution during the Roman Church's dominance.

The use of the imagery of 2 wings has been attached to the fact that both Sabbatarian Christians and Jews were persecuted during this time, but frankly, I think its just John adding some artistic style to the scene.

The Christian Church can draw a direct and unambiguous line between the Old Jews and their origins, and we have discussed heavily the groups that kept the commandments of the Jews and those that did not.

<sup>15</sup> So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. <sup>16</sup> But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.

The flood imagery here is clearly intended to contrast God's promise never to use that tool again. The serpent/dragon attempted to use tools at its disposal to exterminate the woman by flooding her until the earth itself came to her protection and secured her from the flood.

Most of the time, this passage is attributed to the Waldenses in the Piedmont Valley in North Italy. We have discussed their plight in Chapters 2 and 3. According to B G Wilkinson in Truth Triumphant, they were clearly a Sabbatarian people. At the Synod of Verona in 1184 Pope Lucius III excommunicated them and in 1215, Pope Innocent III officially denounced the Waldenses as heretics during the Fourth Lateran Council.

The first deaths started in 1211 when more than 80 Waldenses were burned as heretics at Strasbourg and matters escalated until 1487 when Pope Innocent VIII issued a bull for the extermination of all the heresies of the Vaudois. A local crusade was arranged that almost saw the extermination of several groups in the area. The most notable of these extermination attempts was the Mérindol massacre of 1545, when King Francis I of France attempted the Waldenses entirely and came close to succeeding.

When the Reformation came, the decimated Waldenses had little choice but join with firstly Calvinist and later Episcopalian groups, sacrificing their individuality - and the Sabbath Truth - for their survival.



This passage does not refer to the Waldenses explicitly, however, but rather to all the Sabbath keeping Christian groups. While persecution was common, its extent and effectiveness varied wildly, and there was always a natural barrier to protect the remnant. The Waldenses have hundreds of such stories, where natural barriers and caves protected and saved their people from the attacking crusaders; but the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and Jews share many of the same experiences. The Waldenses are simply the best, western, example.

<sup>17</sup> And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The result of these elements was that the woman was preserved for the full 1,260 days and the Dragon was not happy. As has been outlined above, the realisation that his forces had not exterminated the woman or her offspring – that is the groups that arose after the 1,260 days – led the Dragon to know his doom was shortly at hand. Those who keep God's commandments and those who hold the words of Jesus as their highest authority are the true descendants that the Dragon wishes exterminated.

Something interesting but misunderstood to note is the unusual phrase "[the testimony of Jesus Christ](#)." A link has been made between this phrase and Revelation 19:10. While it has been my intention to not 'read ahead', an interrogation of this phrase is apropos at this juncture. Revelation 19:10 says ' [And I \(John\) fell at his \(an Angel's\) feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."](#) ' (Explanations added). The explanation is given here that the angels consider themselves to be the servants of God and there to support the Saints who have had the opportunity they do not have – that of accessing Salvation. But he concludes by explaining that "[the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy](#)" an extremely curious phrase.

We have the idea that 'prophecy' means predicting the future, while at the time of Jesus and in the old Jewish tradition, 'prophecy' was much more about telling truth to power. If we consider the great prophets of old; Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel etc, their primary mission was to explain the truth of God's word to the people around them and to the powers that were in charge, not to tell them the future. Often these were mixed bags, like Daniel and Isaiah, but some, like Elijah and Elisha, did almost no future telling at all.

The “[testimony of Jesus](#)” is, therefore, the boldness to stand before powers and stand against injustices and do and say as God commands, irrespective as to the consequence; indeed, not considering the consequences at all. Verse 11 makes this exceptionally clear, claiming the Saints beat the Dragon “[by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.](#)” When Martin Luther stood at Worms, when Bishop Cranmer preached from the Fire, when the Waldenses spread Gods word right under the noses of Roman authorities, they took risks that the considered acceptable and only attempted to preserve their lives to spread his word farther; not for their own good. May we have such courage!