

The History of the Future

Revelation 12:1-5

ANNOUNCE

CCA Conference - volunteers and early bird.

Israel - Those who signed up will receive an email link on Thursday evening.

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Rev 12:1-18 NKJV] **1** 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. **2** Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. **3** And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. **4** 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. **5** 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. **6** 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. **7** And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, **8** but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. **9** 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. **10** 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. 11 "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. 12 "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." 13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male [Child]. 14 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. 15 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. 16 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. 17 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. 18

INTRO

Some people love reading more than others, but I haven't met a person who doesn't love a great story. One that they can get caught up in. Characters you love, characters you hate, plots, plot twists, love, suspense... all of these bring life to words on a page.

When it comes to the gospel, it is a simple truth: Jesus Christ died to save sinners. By grace through faith, we can be forgiven and reconciled to God and receive the gift of eternal life. If I only had two minutes with a person, those are the facts I would want to communicate.

- But let me tell you when you have a moment to discover that the gospel is a story, a narrative, that God has woven together from beginning to end through every age and every culture, from the stars in the sky to the molecules that make up the universe, you realize the gospel is more than a set of beliefs; it's the one thing that makes the most sense in the history of the world, and its future.

[Isa 46:9-10 NKJV] 9 "...For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure...'"

I don't know how many of you are like me, and I'm not saying it's good, but if I'm at a library or a bookstore glancing through books, sometimes I skim through it, open a random page at

the beginning, a random page in the middle, and a random page at the end and just read something. Rarely have I ever gotten a full sense of the intricacies of the story by reading random sentences through the course of the book's storyline.

Well, the apostle John is at the end of the story. He's outlining the final seven years of Israel's history and the unbelieving world's final judgment. But this part of the story is connected to so much. From the Garden of Eden to the new heavens and earth, there is a story that makes sense of what you read at the end. As we've studied, I've tried to take you back to several points in that story. We've studied the 70th-week prophecy of Daniel and overlapped it with Revelation. We've studied the seven versions of the temple, exploring God's presence with man from the Garden of Eden all the way to the new creation.

Well, today, as John has observed seven seals broken and seven trumpets blown, unfolding the righteous judgments of God on the earth, chapter 12 pauses to give a history lesson as well as a future lesson.

- Chapters 12-14 tell us a story relating to Israel, their Messiah, their enemy, and their end. John is privy to a sign shown in heaven that takes him back in time and then moves him forward into the future. You could say that John goes from being in the midst of the great tribulation to having a 10,000 foot perspective of the story that started long ago.

APPLICATION

Chapter 12 centers around three main characters that take us into the past and blast us into the future. I guess we could call this chapter "Back to the Future," but I think that's been taken.

1. **A Woman** - Has the sun, moon, and twelve stars in her design.
2. **A Child** - destined to rule the world.
3. **A Dragon** - Who is the great enemy of the Woman, the child, the heavenly angels, and the earth.

Now, here's what I love about chapter 12. If we simply allow the Bible to interpret the Bible, we can pretty easily understand the story that John is seeing unfold before him. If we understand the prophecies that started all the way back in Genesis 3, the dreams of Joseph, the formation of Israel, the nature of Satan, not only can we see what has already happened, but we can get a sense of where all of this is headed.

We also need to recognize something that is pointed out at the very beginning of this portion of the vision.

- **Verse 1 - Now a great sign appeared in heaven** - *Something that signifies or represents a supernatural reality.*
 - *What John sees here are not actual physical realities but things that represent the real-life characters in the story.*

1 Events Past (vs. 1-5)

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Rev 12:1-18 NKJV] 1 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. 2 Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. 4 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. 5 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.

A. THE WOMAN

Let's look at this woman:

- Clothed with the sun
- Standing on the moon
- 12 stars around her head

There are several interpretations of who this woman is, but only one that I believe really fits the context.

A. The Roman Catholics have adopted the belief that the woman of Revelation 12 is a picture of Mary.

- **This is why, in Catholic artwork, you'll often see Mary portrayed in this description.**
- This is a hard sell. First, because we have already been told this is a sign. This isn't an actual woman. Also, there are other things that happen to this woman in this chapter that don't match up with Mary as a person.

B. Other mainline protestant denominations, post and ah millennials, interpret this woman as being the church.

- The main problem with this interpretation is that the woman clearly gives birth to the Messiah. As we know, Jesus gave birth to the church, not the other way around.

C. But if we allow scripture to interpret scripture and allow ourselves to accept the most obvious interpretation, we quickly recognize that this woman is Israel.

ISRAEL

She is persecuted by Satan, and out of her comes the messiah.

- **Genesis 37:9-11** - Joseph has a dream, and in it, the sun, moon, and eleven stars bow down to him. Now, the eleven stars represented his brothers or the eleven tribes of Israel. The sun and moon were his father and mother, Israel (Jacob) and Rachel. Joseph was the twelfth star.
- In Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, Israel is often identified as a woman. So, the imagery in Revelation 12 fits well with the Old Testament description of Israel.

BIBLE PASSAGE

2 Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Mic 5:2-3 NKJV] 2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting. 3 Therefore He shall give them up, until the time that she who is in labor has given birth; then the remnant of His brethren shall return to the children of Israel.

APPLICATION

This woman is pregnant:

- A human has a gestation period of 9 months.
- A camel has a gestation period of 14 months.
- An elephant, 21 months!

Hey, none compared to the 2000 years the nation of Israel waited before their messiah was birthed. From the time that Abraham was promised his seed that would bless all nations to the birth of Jesus was a long period of development that finally ended with the birth of the Messiah.

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Isa 26:17-18 NKJV] 17 As a woman with child is in pain and cries out in her pangs, [When] she draws near the time of her delivery, So have we been in Your sight, O LORD. 18 We have been with child, we have been in pain; We have, as it were, brought forth wind; We have not accomplished any deliverance in the earth, Nor have the inhabitants of the world fallen.

B. THE DRAGON - PAST

3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. 4 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.

Remember, this is a sign. There is not a literal dragon, but a representation of a personality, a being. Thankfully, it's not difficult to discern who this being is because the Bible tells us.

[Rev 12:9 NKJV] 9 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.

In Revelation 12, this being is given five titles:

- **Great dragon** - fierce and destructive
- **Serpent of old** - A clear reference to the garden of Eden, where we saw his cunning, crafty, slithery ways.
- **Deceiver**- John 8 - Jesus said He is the father of lies, for he was a liar from the beginning, and no truth is found in him.
 - Satan invented the lie. You remember the Garden of Eden. His deceptive nature was glaring right from the beginning. He told Eve, “You will not surely die.”
 - Christian there is something you need to be aware of. The apostle John reminds us in 1 John 5:19 - We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.
 - Sway – held under deception, held under the power of...
 - The entire world, apart from Christ, is following and falling for Satan’s deceptions, and they don’t even believe in him. That is the way he would prefer it. The political system, the social system, economic systems, educational systems are all influenced to one degree or another by Satan’s deceptions and my friends, he is a great liar, the best. He has had thousands of years of practice.
 - It’s only in Christ that we become aware of his deceptions. Paul warns the Corinthians to be aware. In the NLT he tells them in 2 Corinthians 2:11, “so that Satan will not outsmart us. For we are very familiar with his evil schemes. We need to be aware of his deceptions and tactics that he seeks to use to divide us and separate us from our fellowship with one another and with Him.
 - One other interesting thing to think about. If Satan is the father, or the originator of lies, what does that say about who’s example we are following when we lie to each other? Colossians 3:9 - Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds...

- **Devil**- Dia-ballo - to cast against - speaks of his role as the accuser of the brethren.
 - Satan regularly goes before the heavenly audience and brings up accusations against God's people. More than likely, your name has been mentioned by Satan. You might think that you are not important enough for Satan to bother with. Are you kidding me?
 - Are you a believer in Jesus Christ?
 - Are you forgiven by His blood?
 - Are you filled with His Holy Spirit? If so, you are a major threat the kingdom of darkness. Satan's most important mission during his time here is to stop you, to render you ineffective for ministry. He has nothing better to do with his time than to try and kill, steal, and destroy your life. The good news is, "Greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world."
 - And how comforting it is to know that when Satan brings up that accusation against you, you have an advocate who stands up in your place and says, "Your honor, every despicable thing that Satan has said is true, but that one belongs to me! I paid the required price in full and they have been declared righteous and forgiven!"

1:19



- **Satan** - the word means adversary - the antithesis of all that is good, right, and true, the one who opposes God, God's people, and the truth.

DESCRIPTION

His authority on earth:

His description gives us an idea of the authority he wields over the nations of the earth:

- **Seven heads and ten horns with seven royal crowns on his heads**- There are so many potential interpretations we can implement here.
 - Some suggest that this references the ten horns of Daniel seven, speaking of the kingdom that the antichrist will eventually lead. Potentially a revised Roman empire.
 - Rather, I think the symbolism in chapter 12 is simply pointing out to us that Satan has a sense of authority over unbelieving kingdoms and world leaders.

- He wears crowns over various kingdoms of the world. The horns, or the leaders of those kingdoms, have their roots in him.

His authority over angels: 4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth.

- Stars here symbolize angelic beings (they are stars of heaven).
- When Satan initially rebelled against God's authority, he apparently had the cunning to deceive a third of the angelic hosts of heaven to join in his rebellion.
- We see this confirmed in verse 9 because we are told that Satan "has angels" associated with his leadership.
- Notice they all have access to the earth. This is where they roam. This is where they wreak havoc. This is where they deceive and destroy. Many of these angels today are being held for judgment. But 1/3 of all the angels could be more than we could fathom as humans, an innumerable host.
- These angels have been at work in history. Even Paul warned the church that if an angel of heaven preached any other gospel to you, let him be accursed.

[Eph 6:12 NKJV] 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

HIS MISSION

And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

The goal of Satan, from the fall of man in the Garden, was to stop or destroy the hope of a savior or Messiah who could undo the damage he had caused.

Protoevangelion (first prophecy of the Messiah's victory of the works of Satan) = **[Gen 3:15 NKJV] 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."**

Seed (singular) of the woman - the virgin birth of Jesus, the Messiah. He would ultimately crush the head of the serpent and his seed.

Seed of the serpent - Anti-Christ and all those born of deception. Remember when Jesus told the Pharisees that they were "of their father the devil?" Jesus crushed Satan's authority through the cross and resurrection. Today, His truth crushes the lies of the devil, and one-day future, Jesus will crush the antichrist and do away with Satan's authority once and for all.

Satan had been on a mission to wipe off the opportunity for this Messiah.

- This is why he moved Pharaoh to kill all Hebrew children, but God preserved Moses.
- This is why Satan moved Herod to kill all the Hebrew children, but God warned Joseph and preserved Jesus.

QUOTE

“ The birth of Jesus was more than a cute nativity story. One author put it,

“The nativity was an all-out invasion on enemy- occupied territory. Every gun in the arsenal of darkness was aimed in the little baby’s direction, yet He still triumphed.”

C. THE CHILD

5 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.

Again, if we let scripture interpret scripture, there can only be one identity to this child. It's Jesus.

1. **First, we have his ultimate position of authority-** to rule the nations with a rod of iron.

1. **[Psa 2:7-9 NKJV] 7 "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You. 8 Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' "**

2. Second, we see His ascension into heaven - caught up to God's throne.

1. [Mar 16:19 NKJV] 19 So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.

2 Events Present

APPLICATION

This is the most enormous printed gap in the Bible—the little empty space between verses 5 and 6. What is perhaps most fascinating about this passage is what's not written, for between verses 5 and 6, there have been over 2000 years of human history.

It's worth noting this important observation regarding biblical prophecy. Frequently, we see a great amount of time between events that only have a period between them on a written page.

“Somewhat as a picture lacks the dimension of depth, the prophecy often lacks the dimension of time: events appear together on the screen of prophecy which in their fulfillment may be widely separated in time.” - Alva McClain

- Between the resurrection and ascension of Christ and the escape of Israel into a secret place from Satanic attack is an unknown period of time in which God is dealing with the world through grace and manifesting His truth and wisdom through the church.
- You might recall previously I talked about the pause button on the stopwatch of Israel's history. God has a designated amount of time and a plan in which he deals with Israel and will bring forth all of his promises.

This means that we are living in the Great Pause.

We see this twice in this passage.

- John records the birth of Jesus and the ascension of Jesus, but the parenthesis of his life is left out.
- then we have the ascension of Jesus right into the final tribulation period, but the parenthesis of the church is left out.

What does this tell us? This specific prophecy focuses on God and his dealings with Israel, not God and the church.

Peter, in His understanding and preaching of the gospel, alludes to this gap that he was living in between Christ's departure and His return.

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Act 3:19-21 NKJV] 19 "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, 20 "and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, 21 "whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

COMMUNION

3 Events Future

APPLICATION

ILLUSTRATION

In the Holocaust under Hitler, one-third of the world's Jewish population died. Under the fierce persecution of the Antichrist, controlled and energized by Satan, two-thirds of the Jewish population will die.

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Zec 13:8-9 NKJV] 8 And it shall come to pass in all the land," Says the LORD, "that two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, But one-third shall be left in it: 9 I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people'; and each one will say, 'The LORD is my God.' "
