

Revelation 12

The Outline Bible gives an introduction:

*John sees an interplay between a woman and a dragon, symbolizing the nation of Israel and Satan.*¹

- I. In verses 1-2 we see the woman (maybe Israel); these verses may have to do with satan's persecution of God's nation Israel.
- II. In verses 3-4 we see satan and his fall; this seems to have to do with his beginning and original fall.
- III. In verses 5-6 we see the woman give birth to the male child, Christ, and fleeing to wilderness
 - a. This could have to do with Israel being protected by God during the great tribulation.
 - b. The woman, being Israel.
- IV. In verses 7-17 we see satan thrown to the earth. **The war in the heavens (12:7–12): Some believe this will occur in the middle of the Great Tribulation.**
 - a. *The results* (12:7–9)
 - b. The defeat of Satan (12:7–8): Michael the archangel will defeat him.
 - c. The dismissal of Satan (12:9): He will be cast down to earth.
 - d. *The reaction* (12:10–12)
 - e. Satan will be filled with wrath (12:10b, 12c).
 - f. Saints will be filled with joy (12:10a, 11–12a).
 - g. Sinners will be filled with fear (12:12b).²

Chart from the ESV Study Bible:

Key Themes in Revelation

1. Through his sacrificial death, Jesus Christ [1:5, 18; 5:5–10;](#) has conquered Satan, the accuser, and has [12:1–11](#) ransomed people from every nation to become a kingdom of priests, gladly serving in God's presence.
2. Jesus Christ is present among his churches [1:12–3:22](#) on earth through his Holy Spirit, and he knows their trials, triumphs, and failures.
3. World history, including its woes and disasters, is firmly in the control of Jesus, the victorious Lamb. [5:1–8:1](#)
4. God is presently restraining his own wrath [6:5–11; 7:1–3;](#) and his enemies' efforts to destroy the church [8:6–12; 9:4–6.](#)

¹ H. L. Willmington, [The Outline Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Re 12.

² H. L. Willmington, [The Outline Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Re 12:1–12.

as he patiently gathers his redeemed people [18: 11:3–7](#);
through the testimony that his suffering people [12:6, 13–17](#)
proclaim about Jesus.

5. Present disasters (war, drought, famine, [6:3–17](#); 8:6–13;
epidemic disease), though limited in scope by [11:13](#); [16:1–21](#);
God’s restraint, are foreshadows and warnings [20:11–15](#)
of escalating judgments to come.

6. By maintaining their faithful testimony to the [2:10–11, 26–](#)
death, believers in Jesus will conquer both the [29; 3:11–13](#);
dragon and the beast. The martyrs’ victory, [6:9–11](#); [7:9–17](#);
now hidden, will be manifest in their [11:7–12, 17–](#)
vindication at Christ’s return. [18; 12:10–11](#);
[14:1–5](#); [15:2–4](#);
[20:4–6](#)

7. Satan attacks the church’s perseverance [2:1–3; 22](#); [13:1–](#)
and purity through violent persecution, through [18](#); [17:1–18:24](#)
deceptive teaching, and through affluence and
sensual pleasure.

8. At the end of the age, the church’s [16:12–16](#);
opponents will intensify persecution, but [19:11–21](#);
Jesus, the triumphant Word of God, will defeat [20:7–22:5](#)
and destroy all his enemies; the old heaven
and earth, stained by sin and suffering, will be
replaced by the new heaven and earth; and
the church will be presented as a bride in
luminous purity to her husband, the Lamb.

Verse by verse:

ESV Study Bible intro to this chapter:

Two signs in heaven—a woman who gives birth, and a dragon intent on destroying her offspring—dominate the two visions in this chapter. Twice John sees the dragon decisively defeated, and both descriptions of the battle’s aftermath describe the woman’s protection in the wilderness ([vv. 6, 13–17](#)). The first vision ([vv. 1–6](#)) portrays a decisive battle at the turning point of history when Christ’s incarnation, obedience, sacrifice, and exaltation forever disqualified Satan as the accuser of believers (see [v. 10](#)). Some interpreters think the second vision ([vv. 7–17](#)) also represents the same series of events, while others think it portrays events at the beginning of the great tribulation.

Further, we must take note as the Moody Bible Commentary points out the following:

D. The Seven Signs (12:1–14:20) *These signs are not explicitly associated with either the trumpet judgments or the bowl judgments. Since the bowl judgments are near the end of the tribulation and are associated with the return of Messiah, so these seven signs are evident during the time of the trumpet judgments, probably during the second half of the tribulation (the 1,260 days of*

11:3; 12:6). They are roughly concurrent with the trumpet judgments, and seem to provide a survey of the last half of the tribulation (Thomas, Revelation, 2:115).³

I. In verses 1-2 we see the woman (maybe Israel); these verses may have to do with satan's persecution of God's nation Israel.

*A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars;² and she was with child; and she *cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth.*

- a. We should remember the context. At the end of the previous chapter the Temple of God was opened in Heaven. So, John was looking to the heavens. This is a heavenly vision which he is seeing.
- b. John says he is seeing a great sign and this sign is a woman in labor giving birth, but the descriptions seem to show this is not a literal woman. I used to think he was seeing Mary giving birth to Jesus, but now it seems to make more sense that this is about Israel.
- c. The NET Bible shares: *Sun ... moon ... stars*. This imagery is frequently identified with the nation Israel because of Joseph's dream in Gen 37.⁴ The ESV Study Bible shares something similar, see below.
- d. ESV study Bible: *The woman's description as a great sign in heaven and her clothing with sun, moon, and twelve stars show that she symbolizes Israel (cf. Joseph's dream, Gen. 37:9).*
- e. The IVP Bible Backgrounds Commentary brings extra Biblical context: *This vision reapplies imagery that was widely known in ancient mythology. A pervasive Greek story, spread in several forms, presented Leto begetting the god Apollo while opposed by the dragon Python; Apollo then pursued the dragon Python and slew him. In an Egyptian story, the goddess Isis gave birth to the sun god Horus as the red dragon Typhon was pursuing her; Horus eventually killed Typhon. Such popular stories seem also to have been applied to the Roman emperor, whose rule is here linked with the evil dragon (in contrast with Roman tradition, which portrayed him in terms of the hero Apollo). Although these stories omit many details John includes from other sources (his whole account could be reproduced from the Old Testament and Jewish sources), they indicate that all his readers could identify with a story line modern readers often find impenetrable. But ancient readers familiar with the Bible would especially recognize here the story of Israel giving birth to Jesus and Satan's opposition to God's people.⁵*
- f. Further, the IVP Bible Backgrounds Commentary continues: *Symbolic women occasionally appeared in apocalyptic visions (e.g., 4 Ezra; Hermas probably reflects Roman influence here—Plutarch has a woman in a man's visions of the afterlife).*

³ The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 82975-82980). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

⁴ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Re 12:1.

⁵ Craig S. Keener, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Re 12:1–6.

Ancient writers sometimes meant “signs” in heaven astrologically, but these signs were also fairly common as props in apocalyptic visions. The sun, moon and twelve stars help identify the woman as the twelve tribes of Israel (Gen 37:9). Judaism in this period (e.g., Josephus, Philo; later evident in synagogue mosaics and the rabbis) often associated the twelve signs of the zodiac with the twelve tribes, despite biblical prohibitions against astrological speculation; indeed, the romance novel *Joseph and Asenath* borrows twelve rays from typical Greek imagery for the sun god. But the Genesis reference itself is clear enough to show that the allusion is to Israel (cf. also Abraham and Sarah as sun and moon to Isaac in the Testament of Abraham).

- g. The Old Testament portrayed faithful Israel (or Judah or Jerusalem) as a virgin or God’s bride but their unfaithful equivalent as a prostitute; thus the tale of two cities that contrasts the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev 21:2) and Babylon the prostitute (17:5). (2 Baruch and 4 Ezra also follow Old Testament models and contrast righteous Zion with its oppressor wicked Babylon, by which they meant earthly Zion.)
- h. **12:2.** Righteous Israel was portrayed as the mother of the restored future remnant of Israel (Is 54:1; 66:7–10; Mic 5:3; cf. Is 7:14; 9:6; 26:18–19), an image freely mixed with the image of Israel as a bride (Is 62:5). The Dead Sea Scrolls also spoke of the righteous remnant of Israel travailing to give birth (either to a saved Israel—cf. Rev 12:17—or to the Messiah; the precise referent is disputed). Cf. John 16:21.⁶
- i. The following detailed description of the metaphors come from Dr. Mulholland at Asbury Theological Seminary.
- j. I really like how he breaks down the metaphors, but notice he differs with others believing that the woman is God, NOT Israel. Still his notes are helpful.
- k. Dr. Mulholland dives deeper into this imagery: **clothed with the sun:** This is most likely an image for God. In the Jewish pool of images, God is a pillar of fire (Exod 13:21); light (Job 24:13, 16; 38:19; Pss 4:6; 36:9; 44:3; 89:15; 104:2 [here especially, where God is “dressed in a robe of light”]; Isa 60:19–20; Dan 2:22; and the following NT passages that manifest this Jewish imagery: Acts 26:18; 1 Tim 6:16; 1 Pet 2:9; 1 John 1:5; Rev 21:23–22:5); a flame (Isa 10:17; 29:6); fire (Exod 3:2; 19:18; 24:17; Lev 9:24; 10:2; Num 11:1; Deut 4:12, 24, 36; 9:3; 2 Sam 22:9; Ps 50:3; Isa 66:15); and brightness (2 Sam 22:13; Ezek 1:4, 13; 10:4; Hab 3:4; Sir 23:19). John utilized a wealth of this imagery to describe his vision: Jesus’ “eyes were like flames of fire [cf. 19:12]. His feet were like polished bronze refined in a furnace.... And his face was like the sun in all its brilliance” (1:14–16). John describes his vision of God: “From the throne came flashes of lightning [cf. 8:5; 11:19; 16:18] ... And in front of the throne were seven torches with burning flames. This is the sevenfold Spirit of God” (4:5); the face of the mighty angel, Jesus, “shone like the sun, and his feet were like pillars of fire” (10:1); New Jerusalem “has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city” (21:23; 22:5). First Enoch provides one of the clearest examples of how this imagery developed in the intertestamental period:

⁶ Craig S. Keener, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Re 12:1–2.

- i. *And I beheld a vision, and lo! There was a second house, greater than the former, and the entire portal stood open before me, and it was built of flames of fire.... And its floor was of fire, and above it were lightnings [cf. Rev 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18] and the path of the stars, and its ceiling also was flaming fire. And I looked and saw therein a lofty throne: its appearance was as crystal, and the wheels thereof as the shining sun.... And from underneath the throne came streams of flaming fire so that I could not look thereon. And the Great Glory sat thereon, and His raiment shone more brightly than the sun and was whiter than any snow.... The flaming fire was round about Him, and a great fire stood before Him” (1 Enoch 14:15–22; cf. 71:2–6).⁷*
- l. **the moon beneath her feet.** *This image suggests God enthroned on the praises of Israel (Ps 22:3) since Israel’s is a lunar-based cycle of worship (Num 29:6; 1 Chr 23:31; 2 Chr 2:4; 8:13; 31:3; Ezra 3:5; Neh 10:33; Ps 81:3; Isa 1:13–14; 66:23; Ezek 45:17; 46:3; Hos 2:11). It was apparently such a significant part of their worship of God that they were warned not to worship the moon itself as though it were God (Deut 4:19; 17:3; 2 Kgs 23:5). Another expression in Israel’s worship is that they worship at God’s “footstool” (Pss 99:5; 132:7) suggesting their position in worship is at God’s feet. The Temple where Jewish worship took place was God’s “footstool” (1 Chr 28:2; 4 Ezra 6:4). Falling at someone’s feet to worship is a well-established image for worship (19:10; 22:8; Matt 28:9; Acts 10:25). It seems clear that one image of worship is falling before God’s feet; another is worshiping at God’s footstool, the Temple. Again, these two images—a lunar-based cycle of worship and worship imaged as falling at God’s feet—strongly suggest that John was imaging God as the woman.⁸*
- m. **Notice that Dr. Mulholland differs from others as he believes that John is imaging God as the woman.**
- n. **a crown of twelve stars on her head.** *The number “twelve” suggests the 12 tribes of Israel, and in both Isaiah and Zechariah the restored Israel is seen either as a crown in God’s hand (Isa 62:3) or like jewels in a crown (Zech 9:16). In Joseph’s dream the progenitors of the 12 tribes are seen as stars (Gen 37:9). Beale (1999:625–626) provides extensive evidence for understanding the stars as Israel. If the stars are Israel, however, then the woman cannot be Israel, and if the crown is Israel as in Isaiah and Zechariah, the one wearing the crown cannot be Israel. It is not too much of a leap to see the crown in God’s hand (Isa 62:3) as intended for his head (12:1). This image, also, strongly suggests that the woman is God. When the woman is understood in the light of Jewish imagery, therefore, rather than traditional allegorical interpretation, we can fairly well surmise that she symbolizes God.⁹*

⁷ M. Robert Mulholland Jr., [“Revelation,”](#) in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 504.

⁸ M. Robert Mulholland Jr., [“Revelation,”](#) in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 505.

⁹ M. Robert Mulholland Jr., [“Revelation,”](#) in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 505.

- o. **The Moody Bible Commentary** points out that some see her as the Virgin Mary, but a symbolic meaning is clearly intended. (a symbolic meaning is clear with the harlot in Revelation 17 as well.) The author of the Moody Bible Commentary Revelation section believes the woman is symbolic of Israel. Dr. Rydelnic also believes the same. Some think the woman is the church, but the church did not give birth to Jesus. Nor, did Israel in a literal sense, but Jesus came through Israel.
- II. In verses 3-4 we see satan and his fall; this seems to have to do with his beginning and original fall.

*Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. ⁴ And his tail *swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.**

- a. Satan's rebellion was his desire to be God, to take God's place. In the pseudepigraphic *Life of Adam and Eve*, Satan is portrayed as refusing God's command, through Michael, to worship Adam as the image of God. When warned by Michael that he will be subject to God's wrath if he does not worship, Satan replies: "I will set my seat above the stars of heaven and will be like the highest" (*Life of Adam and Eve* 15:3). This is what John seems to see at this point in his vision—Satan's refusal to allow God to be God and his desire to usurp God's place.¹⁰
- b. So, another sign.
- c. This is still figurative, but seems to represent satan.
- d. The Moody Bible Commentary shares: *While she was in labor, a great dragon (Satan) appeared to destroy her child (v. 4). The seven heads most likely symbolize the seven consecutive world empires of Rv 17:10 (see the comments on 17:3-4), with the ten horns resting on the seventh head and representing a rebellious confederacy aligned with the Devil and the antichrist (13:2; and see the comments on Dn 7:7-8, 24). The diadems refer to his political clout. The stars of heaven that were swept away (v. 4) probably represent fallen angels choosing to follow Satan (see the mention of angels being cast out of heaven in 12:7-8, and "star" used in reference to an angel in 9:1)... Verse 5 overviews various features of the Messiah's kingdom (birth, rule, ascension) although the events are not in order. Finally, it was revealed that Satan would pursue Israel into the wilderness, where God would give her special protection for the final three-and-one-half years. Tribulation period.*¹¹
- e. Dr. Mulholland dives deeper taking this apart: *While "red" is not an impossible translation for purros [^{TG}4450, ^{ZG}4794], the basic meaning of the term is "fiery." The dragon is a bright, blazing being. The fact that the dragon is fiery suggests that his appearance is similar to God's, who has been imaged in John's vision as a fiery presence (see 1:16; 10:1).*

¹⁰ M. Robert Mulholland Jr., "[Revelation](#)," in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 511.

¹¹ *The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 82990-82997). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.*

^{TG} Tyndale-Strong's Greek number

^{ZG} Zondervan Greek number

*Jews saw Satan as originally standing next to God in brilliance, being, power, and authority.*¹²

III. In verses 5-6 we see the woman give birth to the male child, Christ, and fleeing to wilderness

*And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.⁶ Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she *had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.*

- a. This could have to do with Israel being protected by God during the great tribulation.
- b. The woman, being Israel.
- c. ESV Study Note: *The child's mother fled into the wilderness, a setting in which God's people are utterly dependent on him but are protected from the dragon's rage (vv. 13–14). There, she was nourished by God's provision, as were Israel (Ex. 16:13–18) and Elijah (1 Kings 17:6; 19:5–8). Some scholars think the time period symbolized as 1,260 days (or "a time, and times, and half a time," Rev. 12:14; cf. 11:2–3) began with Christ's ascension and will end when God withdraws his restraint on the dragon's power to deceive the nations and gather them against the church (20:7–10). Others understand the "1,260 days" (three and a half years) to represent the second half of the great tribulation, and to be the same period as the second half of Daniel's seventieth week (Dan. 9:27). On this view, the woman's fleeing into the wilderness indicates that during the great tribulation Jewish believers will be persecuted by the Antichrist and will flee into the wilderness (see note on Rev. 11:1–2).*
- d. Dr. Mulholland: ***gave birth to a son who was to rule all nations with an iron rod.*** This is an unmistakable pointer to the Messiah. The image originates in the messianic Ps 2, where the nations are said to plot against the Lord and his Messiah (Ps 2:2). The Lord then proclaims that his "son" (Ps 2:7) will break the nations "with an iron rod" (Ps 2:9). The image is also repeated in John's vision at 2:26–27 and 19:15. This confirms the echoes of Mic 5:2–5a in Rev 12:2 (see commentary).
- e. ***her child was snatched away from the dragon and was caught up to God and to his throne.*** The NLT uses two verbs ("snatched away ... caught up") for what is one verb in the Greek: *harpazō* [^{TG}726, ^{ZG}773]. In the preponderance of uses in the NT, it means to be taken by force (Matt 11:12; 13:19; John 6:15; 10:12, 28, 29; Acts 8:39; 23:10; Jude 1:23; cf. the related words in Matt 7:15; 12:29; 23:25; Mark 3:27; Luke 8:29; 11:39; 18:11; Acts 6:12; 19:29; 27:15; 1 Cor 5:10–11; Phil 2:6; Heb 10:34). The exceptions are 2 Cor 12:2, 4; 1 Thess 4:17, where the word is used to denote "being

¹² M. Robert Mulholland Jr., "[Revelation](#)," in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 505.

NLT New Living Translation

^{TG} Tyndale-Strong's Greek number

^{ZG} Zondervan Greek number

carried away [to heaven].” I would suggest that the image is not just that of Christ being carried away to heaven but also ripped away from the dragon (= Satan). The NLT captures both ideas. In the context of 12:5, the image also represents God’s victory over Satan who had the Messiah in his grasp (the Cross). I think this makes it unmistakably clear that the child was taken by force from the possession of the dragon. In this one term, John captures the Cross (the Messiah grasped by the dragon), the Resurrection (the Messiah taken away from the dragon), and the Ascension (the Messiah taken up to God).¹³

- f. **Mulholland continues** This is extra info about “the wilderness--- won’t go over in class: As Beale notes, the wilderness “was not only where Israel was protected ... but also an uninhabitable place of sin, evil, or judgment, where only fierce animals and evil spirits dwelled” (1999:645). Here we have the strange paradox of “wilderness” (or “desert”) being both an image for God’s presence with the covenant community, as well as the place of Satan’s presence. The wilderness was where Israel was to go to meet with God (Exod 3:18; 5:1–3; 7:16). It was in the wilderness that God appeared to Israel (Exod 16:10). The wilderness was also where the goat bearing the sins of Israel was sent (Lev 16:10). It was in the wilderness that John the Baptist announced the advent of the restoration of the kingdom, calling Israel to cleansing from its sin in order to be ready (Matt 3:1). John’s action reveals how the image of wilderness was further developed in the Jewish perspective as the place from which God would come to restore the kingdom to Israel (cf. Isa 40:3 [cited in Matt 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23]). The wilderness became the staging area for messianic movements whose leaders announced the restoration of the kingdom (Acts 21:38; Josephus *War* 2.259–262, 433, 508; 6.351–352; 7.438; *Antiquities* 20.97–99, 168–172). Jesus warned his followers against such movements and their messianic pretenders (Matt 24:24–26). It was in the wilderness that Jesus encountered and defeated Satan’s temptations (Matt 4:1). The ultimate outcome of the encounter of God with Satan in the wilderness is the transformation of the wilderness into a place of life (Isa 35:1, 6; 43:19). Thus, when John later sees the harlot, fallen Babylon, she is in the wilderness, seated upon the beast (17:3) to whom Satan gives his power, his throne, and his great authority (13:2). There all those allied with the beast make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb conquers them (17:14). In this broader context, therefore, God as the woman going into the wilderness is thoroughly consistent with John’s Jewish imagery of the wilderness as a place of encounter with God.¹⁴

- g. **God had prepared a place.** Beale rightly notes that “elsewhere in the NT *topos* [^{TG}5117, ^{ZG}5536] (‘place’) is a synonym for ‘temple.’ In the LXX it is a common synonym for ‘sanctuary’

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¹⁴ M. Robert Mulholland Jr., “[Revelation](#),” in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 506.

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LXX Septuagint

[e.g., Lev 4:24; 7:2; 14:13; Deut 12:5, 11; 1 Kgs 8:29]" (1999:648). He adds, "In the Gr. OT, by itself or with adjectives (e.g., 'holy place'), [it] is often used of the temple" (1999:649). "Temple" in the Jewish pool of images is the dwelling place of God (2 Chr 7:1–3; Pss 11:4; 18:6; Isa 6:1; Ezek 43:4–5; Mic 1:2; Hab 2:20; Mal 3:1). The significance of John's use of *topos* in this perceptual milieu is that later John notes that there is no temple in the New Jerusalem because God and the Lamb are its temple (21:22), even though he has utilized temple imagery throughout to convey his vision. This suggests that the *topos* in 12:6 and 14 is the "place" of God.¹⁵

If interested the IVP Bible backgrounds Commentary of the New Testament gives more extra-biblical references of descriptions like this: **(we will not go over in class)**

Ancient Mesopotamian myths portrayed seven-headed monsters; later Jewish tradition linked the worship of dragons to Babylon (Bel and the Dragon 23–27). The image of a seven-headed serpent or dragon was also part of Canaanite mythology that the Israelites symbolically turned to better purposes: God's parting the Red Sea was now symbolized as a defeat of the primeval serpent Leviathan or Lotan (Ps 74:13–15; cf. also Ps 89:9–10; Is 27:1; 30:7; 51:9; Job 9:13; 26:12–13; Ezek 29:3; for the principle see Ex 12:12. Rahab in some of these texts had become a cipher for Egypt—Ps 87:4). The Greek hero Heracles also confronted a seven-headed dragon, the Lernean hydra, in Greek mythology, although the number of heads changed quickly! Serpents were also associated with Asclepius; their association with Athena is less relevant in Asia Minor. Serpent veneration is common in many cultures and prevailed in a Gnostic sect called the Ophites in the second century.

Jewish people had many stories about the great evil reptile Leviathan, that he would even be killed and served up as part of the course at the messianic banquet (cf. 2 Baruch and later rabbis). Here the dragon is identified with the serpent of Genesis 3 and the devil (Rev 12:9).

12:4. *The image of stars battling in heaven was used in the Old Testament (Judg 5:20, figurative language for the heavens pouring out rain), the Sibylline Oracles (catching the world on fire) and some Greek sources. Old Testament texts and later Jewish texts portrayed both Israel or the godly (Dan 12:3; cf. 8:10) and angels (1 Enoch; probably also Is 24:21 and 2 Baruch) as stars. Jewish traditions usually assigned the fall of angels to the period of Adam (refusal to worship God's image in Adam) or, more often, to Noah's time (sexual sins), but Revelation links their fall especially with rebellion against Christ.*

12:5. *Virgil and other Roman writers also extolled the birth of a divine boy who would bring deliverance to the world; the first emperor Augustus quickly filled the role of the divine savior in imperial ideology. In Revelation, however, the emperor is a puppet of the dragon, whereas Jesus is the divine leader of a group persecuted for rejecting the imperial cult.*

*In the various forms of the Greco-Roman and Near Eastern myth, the divine child was sheltered until he returned to slay the dragon. Here he is kept at God's throne until he comes to destroy the dragon. **In the light of Psalm 2:6–9, Isaiah 9:6–7 and Micah 5:3, the "birth" probably***

¹⁵ M. Robert Mulholland Jr., "[Revelation](#)," in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 506–507.

indicates Jesus' death, resurrection and messianic enthronement, not his literal birth (cf. Jn 16:21).¹⁶

IV. In verses 7-17 we see satan thrown to the earth. **The war in the heavens (12:7–12): Some believe this will occur in the middle of the Great Tribulation.**

And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war,⁸ and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.¹⁰ Then 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 brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.¹¹ And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.¹² For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.”

*¹³And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child.¹⁴ But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she *was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.¹⁵ And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood.¹⁶ But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth.¹⁷ So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.*

- a. *The results (12:7–9)*
- b. *In the Life of Adam and Eve 12:1–16:4, a pseudepigraphical writing dated from the first to third century AD, Michael brings Adam before the hosts of heaven and calls for them to worship the image of God. Satan and his angels refuse to worship. Satan responds to the threat of God's wrath by seeking to usurp God's place in heaven. As a consequence, in that story, like here, Satan was thrown down to earth with all his angels.¹⁷*
- c. *The defeat of Satan (12:7–8): Michael the archangel will defeat him.*
- d. *So, there is war in heaven.*

¹⁶ Craig S. Keener, [*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Re 12:3–5.

¹⁷ M. Robert Mulholland Jr., [*“Revelation,”*](#) in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 513.

- e. Satan and the demons are not strong enough (verse 8), consequently, there was no longer a place for them in Heaven.
- f. The dismissal of Satan (12:9): He will be cast down to earth with his angels (demons).
- g. he is called: the dragon, the serpent of old, the devil, satan, the one who deceives the whole world.
- h. ESV Study Note: *The victory of Michael and the holy angels over the dragon and its coconspirators may symbolize the triumphant power of Jesus' cross (cf. [Col. 2:15](#)), or a subsequent defeat of demonic forces flowing from Christ's victory at the cross, or the original casting of Satan and his demons out of heaven (see note on [Rev. 12:4](#)).*
- i. *The reaction (12:10–12)*
- j. Now there is a response, a voice from heaven.
- k. This is similar to Rev. 4:8-11 and 5:8-11 and 7:9-11
- l. This seems worshipful.
- m. Salvation,
- n. And power,
- o. And the Kingdom of our God,
- p. And the authority of His Christ
- q. Have come
- r. For or because the accuser... has been thrown down..
- s. There is joy for the saints.
- t. Verse 11: this seems to be about the martyrs. They overcame the devil because of Jesus, the blood of the Lamb, and because of the Word of their testimony... They did not love their life even when faced with death.
- u. They were ready to die for Christ.
- v. Verse 12: "for this reason" or "because of this" or "consequently" rejoice...
- w. They can now rejoice, BUT...
- x. Sinners will be filled with fear (12:12b).¹⁸
- y. The devil is on the earth and only has a short time.
- z. *In light of the fact that two millennia of human history have transpired since this was spoken, this statement requires some explanation. "Time" here is kairos [^{TG}2540, ^{ZG}2789], as in 1:3 where it was noted that the term was not being used chronologically (the Greek term would then be chronos [^{TG}5550, ^{ZG}5989]) but metaphorically to describe the present reality of*

¹⁸ H. L. Willmington, [The Outline Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Re 12:1–12.

^{TG} Tyndale-Strong's Greek number

^{ZG} Zondervan Greek number

^{TG} Tyndale-Strong's Greek number

^{ZG} Zondervan Greek number

God's realm that has been inaugurated in the Messiah. The vision is now revealing to John that Satan's realm is severely proscribed.¹⁹

- aa. Verses 13-17 pick up on the war with satan:
- bb. The dragon, the devil, now persecutes the woman, Israel, or the church [**I partly wonder if it is both**]
- cc. Verse 14: the woman (Israel, or the church) is taken to the wilderness where she is nourished/preserved
- dd. ESV Study Bible: *two wings of the great eagle. A metaphor of the exodus (see [Ex. 19:4](#)) becomes an image of God's care for his church, exposed in the wilderness yet guarded and nourished in its pilgrimage. a time, and times, and half a time. This half-sabbatical period, derived from [Dan. 7:25](#), signifies the brevity of the saints' suffering and of their persecutors' power (see note on [Rev. 11:1-2](#); also [12:6](#); [13:7](#)).*
- ee. Verse 15: the serpent, the devil tries to drown her/the church/Israel
- ff. ESV Study Note: *water like a river. The serpent tries to destroy the people of God by lies and false teaching from its mouth, as it had deceived Eve ([Gen. 3:13](#)).*
- gg. Moody Bible Commentary: *A time and times and half a time (v. 14) (Dn 7:25) is a reference to a three-and-one-half-year period during the great tribulation in which God will meet all of Israel's needs. Wings of the great eagle is a metaphor of deliverance that was used regarding Israel's exodus from Egypt (Ex 19:4-6). Perhaps it is employed here to suggest that Israel will once again be delivered from oppression.²⁰*
- hh. Verse 16: There is more metaphorical language, the earth swallows up the water.
 - ii. Moody Bible Commentary: *While the possibility of a literal flood cannot be disproved, the term is more likely a metaphor for enemies of Israel (Ps 144:7-8; Dn 11:40) whose efforts God will thwart. The earth (v. 16) is also probably a metaphor for supernatural deliverance by God. In Ex 15:12, Moses said, "The earth swallowed them [the Egyptians at the exodus]," when in reality it was the sea—or more precisely, "the right hand" and "lovingkindness" of God (Ex 15:11, 13). The rest of her children, whom the Devil hotly pursued, is best understood as a believing remnant of Jewish people who come to faith in Messiah Jesus during the tribulation period. And the dragon stood translates the most trustworthy Greek manuscripts, and refers to Satan who summoned the foul character that followed.²¹*
- jj. Verse 17: the dragon was enraged, satan was enraged. Satan goes to persecute, tempt, harm the rest of the children of this woman who: "Keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus."
 - i. **Could it be that the woman is Israel and this is God preserving Israel, but tormenting the children of Israel is tormenting the church?**
 - ii. **A thought?**

¹⁹ M. Robert Mulholland Jr., "[Revelation](#)," in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 514.

²⁰ The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 83020-83023). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

²¹ The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 83024-83029). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

kk. *ESV Study Note: Having failed to destroy the Messiah (cf. [12:4–5](#)) and his mother (i.e., Israel; see note on [12:1–2](#)), the frustrated dragon makes war on the rest of her offspring—that is, war on either the church on earth down through the ages (including the last three and a half years), or, as some hold, war on believing Israel (or the remnant in [ch. 7](#)). These include all who hold to the testimony of Jesus—that is, all who persevere in faithfulness and obedience to the gospel while under the persistent attack of Satan. The dragon’s weapon is the “beast” that emerges from the sea to wage war on the saints ([13:2, 7](#)).*