

## Chapter 12

**V.1-6 The Male Child** There are several different interpretations or understandings of this chapter of Scripture, but I believe that the male child should always be understood to be the Christ child. If you think about this passage of Scripture in the context of the 1<sup>st</sup> century church, I think it helps immensely in understanding the connection between the woman, the child, and the other offspring of the woman. In the first century church a large percentage of the believers were Jews and the connection between Israel, the Messiah, and the offspring would have been very clear. The offspring being understood as believers in Jesus would not have been controversial for Jews in the early church and the woman being understood as Israel would not have been hard for Gentile believers in Jesus either. The most important part of this account though is this male child who will rule all the nations with a rod of iron. This rod of iron will be seen again in Chapter 19 "From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty." (Rev. 19:15) This is a description of Christ's authority and power to rule in the new earth. All those who oppose Him will be broken like pottery and thrown to the ground. Psalm 2 is widely understood as a Messianic passage of Scripture which talks about Christ's future reign.

"Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, 'Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.' He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, 'As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.' I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.' Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him." (Psalm 2:1-12)

In our Revelation of Jesus sermon series, we have been highlighting the fact that Jesus is the exalted and glorified King of the universe who will rule with all authority and power when He returns. This is the significance of the rod of iron and can ultimately be fulfilled by no other person. As we look at this difficult passage of Scripture it may be possible to see the Woman being represented by Israel, by Mother Mary, or the Church but her Son will always be Jesus. For Israel the reference may be to the Messianic Seed and for the Church it may be birthing the return of the King but it is hard to imagine another scenario for the male child especially in the context of Satan being thrown down from heaven. The focus of the dragon is on this child and trying to stop the fulfillment of His mission. We see this in the New Testament account of Jesus' temptation and also His persecution and death. Even surrounding His birth, the demonically inspired plan of Herod to wipe out all male children under the age of 2 reminds us of the devils attempt to stop the male child. There is one sentence that summarizes the failure of his efforts by communicating that the child "was caught up to God and to his throne". We get the impression that this was partly fulfilled in the families escape to Egypt after His birth, but ultimately in His death, resurrection, and ascension. God elevated Him to the place in heaven

over every ruler, authority, and power. The victory of the Son can also be demonstrated in every unique story in the Old Testament as well where the seed of the Messiah is preserved through God's providence and care. Whether looking at the call of Abraham, the rule of Joseph, or the reform of Josiah - the lineage of the Messiah is identified and preserved to foreshadow the Son who will come. This Son is Jesus. But who is this child if you search for his identity in the context of the last days and the great tribulation time of 3 ½ years? Could this foreshadow the end time church and her need to birth the return of the Messiah? Certainly, God has designated "the day" of the Lord but yet at the same time throughout the book of Revelation we see the importance of the incense of the Saints that rises before the face of God. These prayers for God's Kingdom to come and for Jesus' return and rule will certainly be part of God's plan for ushering in the return of His Son and ending the devil's ruling influence. This is an important reminder for the end time church to actively engage in praying for the Lord's return and for God's Kingdom to come. Come Lord Jesus. In summary, I would see Jesus being the male child in the first part of Chapter 12 through the fact that He is the fulfillment of Israel's promise for a Messiah. Every preservation and deliverance of the Jewish people was ultimately the preservation and deliverance for the purpose of the Anointed One. Jesus' literal birth, life, and victory are represented by the middle section of the passage and achieve the displacement of the devil from his place in heaven. The final section of the passage connects to the male child Jesus by understanding that it will be the Messiah who is going to return to rule and reign. There will be birth pains and a birthing process on the earth, with regard to the Jews, and in the Church to accomplish His final return.

**V.7-9 The Red Dragon** In this passage of Scripture we see some of the most descriptive and detailed verses in the entire Bible about Satan. If we highlighted the importance of Chapter 12 in the context of the final 3 ½ years we would say it is primarily about the devil's activities and his coming destruction. You could also look at this passage of Scripture as Satan's origin story which sets us up for his activity in the next chapter and his final defeat in the following chapters. The first thing that we see here is that this red dragon is clearly the devil as indicated here and in Chapter 20 as well. He is called in this passage – the great dragon, the ancient serpent, the deceiver of the whole world, the devil and Satan. The term dragon is only found in Revelation but the rest of the names remind us of other instances and references throughout Scripture which describe the enemy of our souls. The term devil means slanderer or accuser and the name Satan indicates enemy or adversary. The devil is diabolos in the Greek and the name Satan actually comes from the Hebrew where he is often referred to as ha-Satan. In the previous verses we are reminded of his knowledge and power as indicated by his seven heads and ten horns. He also wears seven crowns and this reminds us of his position of authority over the kingdom of darkness. He is the one who initiates the other angels falling from heaven and this description reminds us that he rules over them. We are not told how many fallen angels there are but we are reminded that a third is not a majority but it is a significant minority of the angel population. It is a good reminder of how Satan started and that he is in rebellion and leading a rebellion against the Lord and His will. Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:12-17 both remind us the condition of Satan before his fall and include descriptions of his grandeur and beauty. It is a vivid reminder to us all about the enemy of pride and the origin of all rebellion from appropriate authority. [What Bible Passages Actually Describe Satan's Origin and Fall? - Allen Creek Community Church \(ac3.org\)](#)

Although we hear of Satan's beauty and power in this passage, we are very clearly reminded that it is all temporary as all ubiquitous authority will be dealt with. Three different times in these three verses we see that Satan or his angels are thrown down. It is emphatic and repetitive. He was thrown down. He is being thrown down and he will be thrown down forever. I think that we often imagine Satan being thrown down and losing his place in heaven when he rebelled against God but that is not the picture of his activity that we see throughout Scripture. In the Old Testament in multiple places, we see that Satan is before the Lord in heaven accusing God's people of sin. He does this in the story of Job (Job 1) and he also does this to Joshua the high priest (Zechariah 3). These are two righteous men as we would think of them humanly speaking and yet Satan does not fail to bring their case to God. You get the picture that Satan was constantly in front of God accusing someone of something. That was until he was thrown down. This passage in Revelation 12 does contain verbiage about Satan continually accusing the saints after he is thrown down, but I imagine this as a summary of what he used to do before this point and time. The other option would be that he is still accusing either on earth or maybe in some other way, but it doesn't seem to be so in Scripture. Although we see Satan in heaven in the Old Testament we don't get any testimonies, visions, or stories about Satan being in heaven anymore after Jesus' death and resurrection. In fact, in this passage in Revelation and then also elsewhere we get the impression that his activity is now at least primarily on earth if not entirely so. "But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!" (Revelation 12:12b) and "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world." (1 Peter 5:8-9) This doesn't mean that Satan isn't on the earth before Christ and can't be in heavenly places after Christ, but something definitely changed. It appears that in Satan's rebellion his relationship changed but that his access or abilities did not. But with Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension Satan is thrown down. He is defeated. We almost get the picture that when Jesus assumes the throne in heaven at His coronation that the devil's place and access have changed. There is a new ruler in heaven and no place for Satan is allowed. He is no longer allowed to accuse the followers of Jesus before the Father because they are covered by the blood. There is no longer any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. The devil has not been totally destroyed but now he has an invisible fence that provides boundaries and limitations which he didn't have before. Now he is seemingly on a chain unable to loose himself regardless of his furiousness. Finally, upon Jesus return the devil will be destroyed entirely.

**V.10-12 The Dragon Is Displaced** These verses are a declaration from heaven about Satan being thrown down and the kingdom of God arriving on earth. It is unclear exactly who the voice or voices are from in heaven because it says "the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down" so you don't imagine it would be the angels because of the term "brothers." When it talks about these saints conquering it says "they have conquered" instead of "we have conquered" so you don't get the impression either that it is the martyrs or souls that have already been saved in heaven because they would certainly be included in that category. Some have proposed that it may be the twenty-four elders but honestly it isn't that consequential who is saying it nearly as much as what is being said. Because of the weight of what is being said in this passage I think it bears justice to include these monumental verses about what is happening.

“And 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 brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!’”

It is hard to exaggerate the importance of this statement and the result of Jesus' victory over the devil in these verses. The devil has been defeated and his time is short! Every time another believer in Jesus endures to the end without forsaking or quitting or turning their backs on God we hear this statement echo in heaven. Rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! Here comes another one who has conquered by the blood of the Lamb, by their testimony of Jesus, and who wasn't afraid to die. With every saint that passes on from this life I imagine a bell being rung in heaven which echoes throughout the corridors constantly reminding them of Satan's eternal defeat and coming end. He may prowl around like a roaring lion, but he is a defeated foe. I imagine it being like a death row inmate in between sentencing and execution. Often there can be years before people are put to death after receiving the death sentence. Eventually their day is set and the execution is carried out. The sentence has been determined for the devil and now it is just a matter of time. As we see in this passage though, it is not good news for the earth in the short term as Satan knows his time is closing quickly and comes in great wrath to try and attack all the offspring of the woman. (Those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.) That is part of what the entire book of Revelation is about – Satan's final fury or as some refer to it - his little time of trouble. That is what we will begin to see takes place in the next chapter, but in this chapter, we get the motivation and reason for his desperation. That is why it is often appropriate and accurate to talk about the book of Revelation as the entire New Testament time frame because it is this period of time that Satan is thrown down to try and war against the woman and her offspring. There will be a specific time of a final great tribulation, but the church has been in tribulation ever since the devil's displacement from heaven.

**V.13-16 The Woman** The verses about “The Woman” in this chapter are contained throughout the entire passage but I have entitled this section as such for the purpose of splitting up the characters. For this section it is especially hard to pick only certain verses that describe the child, the woman, or the dragon because the entire chapter tells their whole story. That is one of the reasons why it is so hard and disputed to identify the woman throughout the passage. At the very minimum you are talking about a 2000-year period of time and depending on your interpretation of the first few verses it could be more like 4000 years. I will attempt to share insights and evidence to point you in the right direction but there is certainly mystery contained in this self-identified sign in heaven. One of the interesting possibilities to think about is to imagine that this chapter is split up into smaller segments or time frames that refer to a different woman in each section. Interpretively, I believe this is a valid possibility because we see the passage of time that is conveyed by Satan's story. It begins with his origin and then moves on to his defeat and then finally about the time of his wrath. For instance, verses 1-4 may be identified by Israel, verses 5-12 may represent Mary the mother of Jesus, and verses 13-17 may be the Church in the last days. These are the three primary possibilities that commentators and scholars argue and honestly, I think there are verses in this chapter that could apply to one of the three, all of the three or some that we might just scratch our head about until we get to

heaven. All that to say that it is very difficult and contested to understand concretely who the woman is and we should understand those complications when interpreting and communicating their importance. Some of the complication is that there are certain verses that seem to disqualify each of the options throughout the entire passage. For instance, how could it be ethnic Israel throughout the entire chapter when in the very end we see that it is her offspring that hold to the testimony of Jesus? But how could it be the Church throughout the entire passage when the primary purpose of the chapter is to describe the Messiah's birth? The church wasn't even born until after Jesus' ascension. It definitely appears too limited to propose that it is one individual regardless of how important the mother of Jesus may be and seems very inappropriate to refer to the children of Mary as the offspring of the church. These offspring would be God's children or Jesus' followers not Mary's children. Anyways you see the complications. In our discussion though I think it is important to consider that all three of these possibilities are validly associated and represented by this woman, at least in part. If I was a betting man, I would put my money on the deliberate and miraculous emphasis on each of the women as they each represent an important branch of God's children. Not that Catholics aren't part of the church or that messianic Jews aren't either but if you look at these three groups and their importance before God - Jews, Catholics, and Protestants I think we can begin to understand that to adamantly demand that one representation of the woman is required you will exclude two other valid options which may not just offend another body of believers but possibly God himself.

If we look at each of the individual sections of the chapter that will help us in seeing some of the inferences and indications that point to each of the options for the woman. In the first few verses there is a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and having a crown with twelve stars on her head. While this definitely communicates dominion and reminds us of both the twelve tribes and the twelve Apostles the clearest association is with Joseph and his dream that he communicates with his family before he is betrayed by his brothers.

“Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, ‘Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.’ But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, ‘What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?’ And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.” (Genesis 37:9-11)

This is a very prominent illustration of Israel and one that every Jew would be familiar with and recognize that it was talking about the man named Israel (Jacob) and his twelve sons. The woman in this story would be Rachel but you get the point that this verse in Revelation clearly demonstrates a relationship to Israel. As you look at the next few verses you see that it is most applicable to Jesus' birth by the Mother Mary. These verses give the description of the one who will rule with a rod of iron and the one who is caught up to God and to his throne. It is hard to argue or imagine any other person or woman. We also know that the devil tried to kill Jesus at his birth and they went to the wilderness of Egypt for a time to escape the attack. It is the birth and life of this Son that instigates the war in heaven. The last section is the most difficult to identify because it appears that the intention is talking about a future time frame but when you factor in the time frame of Satan being thrown down to the earth to make war with the woman and her offspring then you can begin to see the very real possibility of the end time Church.

**V.17 The Offspring** The question of who the offspring are in this passage helps us determine their relationship to the woman. Thankfully, we get a very clear description of who these offspring are: those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. I don't think we are to picture two different offspring one which holds to the commandments of God and one which testifies of their faith in Jesus. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism and the Jews are expected to have faith in Jesus just as Christians are expected to keep the commandments. There are not two covenants. There is only one covenant. Jesus is the only way to the Father. As much as I support and esteem the Jewish people, we can't ever start to talk in language that there is another plan of salvation for them. Which is just as important as not talking about the church somehow replacing Israel. The offspring in this section of the passage are clearly Jesus followers and Jesus followers are offspring of Christ. If you want to get technical Christ's bride is the Church and any offspring that come from Christ would also be the Church. Jesus is an offspring of Israel, which makes non-Jewish believers in Him so unique, but it would be inappropriate to talk about Jesus' offspring as Israel unless you were going to clarify a new Israel. This is not the language of the New Testament though. There is a realization that Jesus is of Jewish heritage but His followers are something different now – The Way, Christians, Disciples, Koinonia, The Church, The body of Christ, The bride of Christ. This is the language of the New Testament – His descendants have become something different and unique which transcends any human genealogy or ethnicity or human classifications for there is neither Jew nor Greek, Slave nor Free, Male nor Female. The offspring of the woman must be Christians.