

Living Word Fellowship Church

An Expository Explanation of Revelation Chapter 12

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Part II

Introduction to this chapter: Satan will do a lot of evil which can cause many to fall away from the faith (Matthew 24:12); as some people ask now, how can God allow such evil, there cannot be a God. Just in Covid, he drove people to ask, "Why church?"

"Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me." (Luke 7:23; NIV)

"Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing, they fall away." (Luke 8:13; NIV)

A. Key Words and Apocalyptic Definitions:

1. Just as John retells the conflict of the earlier chapters from the deeper spiritual perspective, so he starts the story again from the perspective of time. He begins from the time immediately before Christ's birth (12:1) and narrates up through Christ's birth and resurrection (vv 2–5, 7–10) to the destiny of Christ's followers in the subsequent age (vv 5–6, 11–17). Most of the portraits in ch. 12 depicts the destiny of believers during the church age. In characteristic style, the story is told through repeated OT allusions. As will be seen, various sections of the chapter are temporally and thematically parallel and thus tell the story over again from different perspectives. Vv 6, 13–16, and 17 are essentially the same in that they all narrate the protection of God's people as they go through trials. Vv 5, 7–9, and 10–12 all describe the same victory over the devil. [\[1\]](#)

2. **Sign** - The term σημεῖον, “sign, portent,” referring to a significant heavenly sight, occurs just three times in the singular in Revelation (12:1, 3; 15:1); each of these is connected, for 12:3 and 15:1 refer to ἄλλο σημεῖον, “another sign,” referring respectively to 12:1 and 12:3. ^[2]

3. **The woman** is undoubtedly the Church of God, not necessarily limited to the Christian Church, but the whole company of all who acknowledge God, including the heavenly beings in existence before the creation, as well as creation itself. The figure is found both in the Old Testament and in the New. Thus Isa. 54:5, 6, “For thy Maker is thine Husband.... For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved” (cf. also John 3:29; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25–32). ^[3]

a) **And the moon under her feet.** This is interpreted as showing the permanent nature of the Church; she treads underfoot the moon, the symbol of changing times and seasons. It is thought that a reference is thus intended to the futility of the endeavors made to subvert the Church (cf. Cant. 6:10). ^[4]

b) **And upon her head a crown of twelve stars.** This image immediately suggests a reference to the twelve apostles of the Christian Church and the twelve tribes of the Jewish Church. Wordsworth observes, “Twelve is the apostolic number, and stars are emblems of Christian teachers.” In like manner, the Jews were accustomed to speaking of the minor prophets as “the twelve.” The crown is στέφανος—the crown of victory—the idea of which is prominent throughout the vision. ^[5]

4. **Satan** - Because Satan can no longer accuse God’s people in heaven, he begins a campaign of terror against them on earth. The extent of his persecutions has already been shown proleptically in the visions of the martyrs (7:14) and the two witnesses (11:7). The formula for victory is now given: the blood of the Lamb coupled with their testimony about him. However, the

testimony that overcomes Satan is the same action that provokes his rage and causes him to declare war on the church (11:17). Even as Jesus was ready to lay down his life (John 10:17), the saints are now prepared to lay down theirs. They do this in obedience to Jesus' command given in the context of his Parousia: "But whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it" (Mark 8:35).^[6]

a) They should be all the more motivated to persevere in the face of Satanic onslaughts because Christ has already defeated the devil and his host through his death and resurrection (12:5, 7–12; cf. Eph. 1:19–21 with Eph. 6:10–13). In fact, the troubles of the persecuted saints occur now, not because Satan is too powerful for them but because he has been decisively overthrown. He does all the damage he can, but he cannot prevail over the church in any ultimate way. The readers can now know that if they compromise, they are not merely compromising with the world but with the devil himself. This realization should shock them out of any degree of spiritual complacency. The exhortation "he who has ears to hear, let him hear" at the end of each letter and in 13:9 underlines the need to perceive these underlying spiritual stumbling blocks. Instead of thinking of compromise, they should reflect on the divine resources they have been provided to withstand Satanic attacks (see 12:6, 11, 14–16; 7:1–8; 11:1–6).^[7]

b) The seven diadems imply his universal dominion as prince of this fallen world (contrast the "many diadems on Christ's head," Rev 19:12, when coming to destroy him and his), the caricature of the *seven* Spirits of God. His worldly instruments of power are marked by the *ten horns*, ten being the number of the world. It marks his self-contradictions that he and the beast bear both the number *seven* (the divine number) and *ten* (the world number).^[8]

c) **Having seven heads and ten horns.** The heads and horns are both declared in ch. 17:10, 12 to typify kingdoms—in what way we shall presently see (ch. 17:10). The numbers *seven* and *ten* are both symbolical of completeness (see ch. 1:4; 5:1; 5:13; 17:3). We have, therefore, in this picture of the dragon, the idea of the total and complete power of the world arrayed on earth against God and His Church. This power, connected with

and derived from the devil, the prince of this world (John 12:31), is often alluded to by St. John as being opposed to, or in contrast with, the godly (see John 7:7; 14:17; 15; 16; 17; 1 John 2:15; 3:13; 5:4, etc.).^[9]

5. **“To the earth”** in a twofold sense: (1) the phrase is a description of the loss of dignity and power on the part of Satan in being cast to *earth* as opposed to heaven; (2) *earth* is the scene of his future operations, where he may still in some degree sustain the struggle against God.^[10]

a) Satan does not cease to accuse, though he may not do so with effect, since he may be overcome by the “blood of the Lamb.” The heavenly beings are henceforth beyond his reach. He can yet accuse men—our brethren—says St. John, but even here, his power is limited by the victory of the death and resurrection of Christ referred to in ver. 5.^[11]

6. **And they loved not their lives unto the death;** *their life even unto death.* That is, they valued not their life in this world, even to the extent of meeting death for the sake of giving their testimony.^[12]

7. **For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time;** or, *came down* (aorist). This “short season” is the period of the world’s existence from the advent of Satan till the final judgment. It is *short* compared to eternity, and it is frequently thus described in the New Testament (Rom. 9:28; 1 Cor. 7:29; ch. 3:11, etc.).^[13]

8. **And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man-child** - The devil, defeated in his attempts against God in heaven, and foiled in his attack upon the *man-child*—Christ Jesus (see ver. 5), now directs his efforts against the *woman*—the Church. The interpretation must not be confined to one peculiar form of evil that which assails the Church. Still, it must include all—the bodily

persecutions with which afflicted those St. John wrote the heresies which arose in the Church, the lukewarmness of her members (ch. 3:16), and all others. ^[14]

9. **And the dragon was wrath with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed;** *waxed wrath ... went away to make*, etc. (Revised Version). Having failed to prevent the mission of the man child—Christ Jesus—and having been foiled in his attempts to overwhelm the Church of God, Satan proceeds to attack the individual members of the Church—the seed of the woman. The method by which he endeavors to do this is related in the following chapters. Wordsworth points out an analogy between Satan's means to destroy the Church as described here and those described in the seals. The “rest of her seed” (Revised Version) signifies all the children of the woman, excluding the man-child of ver. 5. All members of the Church of God are thus referred to as brethren of Christ (cf. Heb. 2:11, “For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren”). ^[15]

10. **Which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ** (nearly all manuscripts omit “Christ”); *hold the testimony* (Revised Version). This plainly points out who are the “rest of the seed”—they are those who are God’s faithful servants. We may see in the description a reference to the Church of God, both Jewish and Christian. The members of the Jewish Church are those to whom “the commandments of God” were specially revealed, and Christians are those who “hold the testimony of Jesus.” (For an explanation of the latter phrase, see on ch. 1:2†.) ^[16]

^[1] Beale, G. K. (1999). [The book of Revelation: a commentary on the Greek text](#) (pp. 623–624). W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

^[2] Aune, D. E. (1998). [Revelation 6–16](#) (Vol. 52B, p. 679). Word, Incorporated.

^[3] Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). [Revelation](#) (p. 309). Funk & Wagnalls Company.

- [4] Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). [Revelation](#) (p. 310). Funk & Wagnalls Company.
- [5] Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). [Revelation](#) (p. 310). Funk & Wagnalls Company.
- [6] Arnold, C. E. (2002). [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Hebrews to Revelation](#). (Vol. 4, pp. 321–322). Zondervan.
- [7] Beale, G. K. (1999). [The book of Revelation: a commentary on the Greek text](#) (p. 623). W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.
- [8] Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). [Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible](#) (Vol. 2, p. 579). Logos Research Systems, Inc.
- [9] Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). [Revelation](#) (pp. 310–311). Funk & Wagnalls Company.
- [10] Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). [Revelation](#) (p. 312). Funk & Wagnalls Company.
- [11] Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). [Revelation](#) (p. 313). Funk & Wagnalls Company.
- [12] Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). [Revelation](#) (p. 313). Funk & Wagnalls Company.
- [13] Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). [Revelation](#) (pp. 313–314). Funk & Wagnalls Company.
- [14] Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). [Revelation](#) (p. 314). Funk & Wagnalls Company.
- [15] Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). [Revelation](#) (p. 315). Funk & Wagnalls Company.
- [16] Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). [Revelation](#) (p. 315). Funk & Wagnalls Company.