

Living Word Fellowship Church

An Expository Explanation of Revelation Chapter 12

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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. General Description:

Revelation 12 “has always been, consciously or not, considered as the center and the key to the entire book.” The chapter begins a new series of visions, which end at 15:4. ^[1]

a) This episode (chapters 12–15) details the persecution of Israel and the elect by the beast, summarily noticed in chapter 11:7–10, and the triumph of the faithful and torment of the unfaithful. So also, chapters 16–20 detail the judgment on the beast, & summarily noticed in chapter 11:13, 18. The beast (v. 3, &c.) is shown to be the instrument in the hand of a greater power of darkness, Satan. ^[2]

b) Therefore, the main point of chapter 12 is the protection of God’s people against Satan because of Christ’s decisive victory over Satan through his death and resurrection. The purpose is to encourage the readers to persevere in their witness despite persecution. ^[3]

Chapters 12–22 tell the same story as chapters 1–11 but explain in greater detail what chapters 1–11 only introduce and imply. Ch. 12 reveals that the devil is the deeper source of evil. Intimations of him have come in 6:8 and 9:11. 11:7 referred to the appearance of “the beast” at the end of history.^[4]

Though 12:1–15:4 can be divided in various ways, the best way to discern its divisions objectively is to trace the repeated introductory vision formulas like, “and I saw” (καὶ εἶδον) and “and behold” (καὶ ἰδοῦ).^[5]

Thus, seven sections or “signs” are seen:

1. The conflict of the serpent with the woman and her seed (ch. 12).
2. Persecution by the beast from the sea (13:1–10).
3. Persecution by the beast from the land (13:11–18).
4. The Lamb and the 144,000 standing on Mount Zion (14:1–5).
5. The proclamation of the gospel and judgment by three angels (14:6–13).
6. The Son of man’s harvest of the earth (14:14–20).
7. The saints’ victory over the sea beast and their victory song (15:2–4).^[6]

There are more terms for Satan in this paragraph (v. 9) than in any other single passage in the Word of God: the great dragon, that old serpent . . . the Devil, and Satan, and—one of the most dreaded phrases in Scripture—not something Satan boasts of, but something which heaven acknowledges—the deceiver of the whole world (see II Tim 3:13; II Jn 7). He is opposed here not by Christ but by Michael and his angels (Rev 12:7; see Dan 10:13, 21; Jude 9), who apparently is the leader of the angelic hierarchy.^[7]

The woman symbolized Israel, as indicated by Genesis 37:9–11, where the sun and the moon referred to Jacob and Rachel, Joseph’s parents. The stars in the woman’s crown clearly related to the 12 sons of Jacob and identified the woman as Israel fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant.

J.B. Smith cites Isaiah 60:1–3, 20 as proof that the sun refers to Israel's future glory (*A Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 182).^[8]

1. The woman was said to be pregnant and about to give birth (12:2). While in some sense, this may be fulfilled in the birth of Christ to the Virgin Mary, the context seems to refer to the emerging nation of Israel in its suffering prior to the second coming of Christ.

This is further supported by the verses which follow.^[9]

The second wonder (*semeion*, “sign”; cf. v. 1) appeared in heaven, though it actually related to scenes on earth. It was a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns on his head. From similar descriptions in Daniel 7:7–8, 24 and Revelation 13:1, this beast represented Satan's control over world empires in the Great Tribulation. Revelation 12:9 identifies the dragon as Satan. The color red might indicate the bloodshed related to this period. The ten horns presented the ten kings symbolically (see Dan. 7:24) who reigned simultaneously with the coming world ruler and were mentioned both in Daniel 7:7 and Revelation 13:1.^[10]

Also, Satan is most obviously active throughout the period of the Church Age (cf. Acts 5:3; 1 Cor. 5:5; 7:5; 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:14; 12:7; 1 Tim. 1:20; 1 Peter 5:8).^[11]

1. While the concept of Satan in heaven is difficult to comprehend, it is clear that he is now the accuser of saints (cf. Job 1:6; Rev. 12:10). Though Satan was defeated at the first coming of Christ (John 16:11), his execution was delayed and is in stages. Here (Rev. 12:8–9), he will be cast out of heaven in the middle of the Tribulation. Later he will be bound for the duration of the millennial kingdom (20:1–3). The devil will finally be thrown into the lake of burning sulfur (20:10) where the world ruler (Antichrist) and the false prophet will have been cast a thousand years earlier.^[12]

Satan's ultimate objective is to destroy the woman's child, Christ (12:4). The son of the woman (12:5) is Christ, as is seen by the fact that he is the ultimate ruler of the nations. Israel's flight to the wilderness is designed to avoid the persecution of the antichrist during the last three and a

half years (1,260 days) of the Tribulation period (Matt. 24:15–21). **In Revelation 12:7–12, the scene shifts from Earth to Heaven**. Satan and Michael, the archangel, are involved in a conflict. Satan and his angels are thrown out of heaven and are confined to the earth (12:9) for the rest of the tribulation period. He will now vent his wrath on the earth. In 12:13–17, having been cast out of heaven, Satan will center his hostilities on the “woman,” Israel (12:5–6). His goal is to destroy Israel so that Christ will not have a people over whom to rule. ^[13]

[1] Beale, G. K. (1999). [*The book of Revelation: a commentary on the Greek text*](#) (p. 621). W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

[2] Brown, D., Fausset, A. R., & Jamieson, R. (n.d.). [*A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Acts–Revelation*](#): Vol. VI (p. 693). William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited.

[3] Beale, G. K. (1999). [*The book of Revelation: a commentary on the Greek text*](#) (p. 624). W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

[4] Beale, G. K. (1999). [*The book of Revelation: a commentary on the Greek text*](#) (pp. 622–623). W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

[5] Beale, G. K. (1999). [*The book of Revelation: a commentary on the Greek text*](#) (p. 621). W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

[6] Beale, G. K. (1999). [*The book of Revelation: a commentary on the Greek text*](#) (p. 621). W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

[7] Pfeiffer, C. F., & Harrison, E. F., eds. (1962). [*The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: New Testament*](#) (Re 11:7). Moody Press.

[8] Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [*Revelation*](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 957). Victor Books.

[9] Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [*Revelation*](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 958). Victor Books.

[10] Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 958). Victor Books.

[11] Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 958). Victor Books.

[12] Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 959). Victor Books.

[13] Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). [Tyndale concise Bible commentary](#) (p. 744). Tyndale House Publishers.