

So, let's start by reading the first six verses.

“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. Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. 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. 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. 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.”

Let's begin by laying a foundation for some of the symbols used in this chapter, and then we'll tie it together and make some applications.

The first thing John sees is, “a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.”

That should sound familiar. Listen to Gen. 37:9-10;

“Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, ‘Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me.’ So, he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, ‘What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?’ And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind.”

Since the woman is to give birth to a Child Who is destined to rule the nations with a rod of iron, we know that she represents Israel, from whom Messiah came.

However, and here is where, for some, a degree of controversy begins. I'm going to read first from Donald Barnhouse to introduce this;

“Most expositors have seen clearly that this woman represents Israel, but have stopped with that simple identification. We believe there is something more in view here. The rest of the chapter is going to reveal that there is war in the spiritual realm, and that this war, which is ages long, is for the

control of the universe. The war began with the fall of Satan, and will continue until the great and terrible day of the Lord shall bring this war to a close. The woman, then, represents not merely Israel 'of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came' (Rom. 9:5), but is that spiritual body of the elect by whom God had eternally purposed to bring to nothing the revolt of Satan. All of the symbols in these verses are found in the earliest chapters of the book of Genesis."

As he said, most commentators realize that the woman is Israel, but few expand beyond Israel to God's elect who will be involved in this final war.

Also, even though Israel brought forth the Messiah, following the ascension Christ represents more than the earthly life of Jesus of Nazareth.

Those who have seen what the Church actually is, as Christ's spiritual body - not just seen it academically, but seen by revelation of the Spirit, can see how the Child born to Israel, Jesus of Nazareth, became the corporate Christ of eternity once the bride had made herself ready, and she and her Bridegroom became one flesh;

(Eph. 5:30, 32) "For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. . . This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

(1 Cor. 12:12) "For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ."

The overcomers within the Church are also said to "rule the nations with a rod of iron";

(Rev. 2:26-27) "And to the one who overcomes and continues in My work until the end, I will give authority over the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter and shatter them like pottery— just as I have received authority from My Father."

They share the eternal vocation of Christ because they share His life and His throne.

(Rev. 3:21) "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne."

And by the way, for those who think all Christians are "overcomers", and the non-overcomers in the seven letters in Rev. 2 & 3 are unbelievers, why is the Lord

telling the “non-overcomers” in Rev. 2:26 that the way to *become* overcomers, to become *Christians*, is to “continue in My work until the end”? Salvation is a gift received by faith alone; works are not involved.

(Eph. 2:8-9) “For it is *by grace* you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”

(Rom. 11:6) “But if it is *by grace*, it is not on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.”

As we saw in 1 Cor. 12:12, the Church is actually called “the Christ”. Just as Adam was incomplete without Eve and was put to sleep so Eve could be taken from his side; so the Church was taken from the pierced side of Christ, formed over the last 2000 years into a glorious bride and presented to the Son following the rapture.

In Rev. 12 we are shown the historical transition from the birth of Jesus to the glorified Christ as Head of a new creation humanity; the formation of what Paul, in Eph 2:15, calls “one new Man”, or as the NIV translates it; “His purpose was to create in Himself one new humanity. . .”. The term “Christ” (as we saw in 1 Cor. 12:12) *now* refers to the glorified Lord as both Head and Body. Christ and His Church are as one spiritually as the Father and the Son are;

(John 17:20-23) “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one.”

In Rev. 12 John is seeing the Church in her ultimate glory as one with the Son, flesh of His flesh, bone of His bones.

(Col. 1:24) “I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church.”

The Church is the spiritual body of Christ and the place where God dwells in the fullness of His glory;

(Eph. 2:21-22) “In (Christ) the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

(Eph. 1:22-23) “And God put everything under His feet and made Him head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

This unity between Christ and the Church was a mystery hidden from all who lived before the Church Age, but revealed through the apostles.

(Col. 1:25-27) “I became its servant by the commission God gave me to fully proclaim to you the word of God, the mystery that was hidden for ages and generations but is now revealed to His saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the confidence of glory.”

And because of what all these passages are telling us, brought forward to Rev. 12, we can see that the Man Child of Rev. 12 is not Christ alone, but Christ in union with His spiritual body, the Church.

Also, you probably noticed, when I read through the chapter, that in 12:5 we’re told that the Child will be caught up to God and His throne. There are two things about this we need see. First, the term “caught up” is completely different than the terms used to describe Jesus’ ascension to heaven following His resurrection.

(Acts 1:9) “When He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.”

The Greek word for “taken up” is *epairo* (eh pie’ ro) and it means “to lift up, raise up, or rise”.

But in 1 Thess. 4:17 we see this;

“Then we who are alive, who are left, will be *caught up* together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.”

The word for “caught up” is not *epairo*, but *harpazo* (har pad’ zo), which means to be “seized with great force”.

The ascension of Christ was an event that the disciples who were watching could see taking place, it was relatively gradual compared to the word used in 1 Thess. 4.

The 'catching away' of the Church will be "in the twinkling of an eye" – so fast that to anyone around us, we just disappear; nothing gradual about it.

Do you want to guess which word is used in Rev. 12 for the Man Child's move to the throne? It's the same word used in 1 Thess. for the catching away of the Church.

But in Rev. 12:5, we aren't looking at the rapture, because the Church is already in heaven. She's transitioning, instantly, to the throne. And this event is happening at the midpoint of the Tribulation, not at the beginning. We know that because the next verse (12:6) tells us that the woman fled into the wilderness and was protected by God for 3 ½ years. This didn't happen when Jesus was born, but it *will* happen at this point in the Tribulation.

Christ has been on the throne for 2000 years; He isn't "caught up" at the midpoint of the Tribulation. This catching up is related to the Church.

Once the Church in heaven has passed through Judgment Seat of Christ and the overcomers have been determined, their ascension to the throne will be as instantaneous as the rapture.

Readiness for the throne requires more than simply making it to heaven (as we saw in our study of the seven letters in Rev. 2 & 3; and especially Laodicea). The *final preparation* of those who will share the throne of Christ is the outcome of the Judgement Seat of Christ.

We can't take time to go back over the details of the Bema Seat now, but the bottom line is that one of the outcomes of this evaluation is to determine who will rule with Christ and who will not rule with Him.

So, one theory of why those within the Church who are destined for the Throne is delayed until the mid-point, is that the first 3 ½ years is the time our Lord plans to take to meet with and evaluate each believer of the Church Age, and bring about what Paul calls, in 1 Cor. 3, the distribution of rewards (such as crowns) vs. the loss of rewards.

Another theory about why the Church's transition to the throne happens at mid-point in the Tribulation is the idea that it was the pre-determined plan of God to begin at this point in the Tribulation, the ongoing activities of the Throne with the overcomers *now directly* involved.

I personally believe that both theories may be accurate – the involvement of the overcomers begins at this time *and* it has taken 3 ½ years to evaluate and prepare this group of believers for that position and action.

The Bema Seat is part of the “placement” process related to adult sonship (spiritual maturity) and the honors that come with that position. This is Spark’s explanation of Heb. 12:6 which says; “The Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He chastens everyone He accepts as His son.”

“What is the purpose of sonship? It is to bring us into a place of spiritual responsibility. Therefore, He has to train us as children in order to develop sonship in us, to bring us there where we can take responsibilities for God. He seeks to bring us to a state of spiritual maturity, to full growth. This cannot be done in a Bible school, or by putting people ‘into some work of ministry’. God *does* take us into His school. He can also take us into His school in some training institute if He chooses. And it is a blessed thing if He does it.

But *God’s* school is something very different from mere scholarly activity. His Word says: ‘My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art reprov’d of Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.’ Note this word ‘whom He receives.’ The exact meaning in the Greek is not ‘receives,’ but ‘positions’ or places. It is a matter of being trained to be placed in a specific position. God is seeking to develop a state in us where He can trust us. When God is dealing with us, there is behind it a wonderful assurance that He is going to put His trust in us. He is bringing us into a position of trust. We do not just want to be servants, bits of a machine, but sons who have become one with the Father, and in whose hands He can put spiritual responsibilities. When we truly recognize this, we begin to understand why God is dealing with us as He does. But because God is in it, we know that the end is sure. He will bring His children through.”

In an earlier study we did, I think in Romans, we saw that all Christians are children of God, but not all are “sons”. The Greek word for “sons” is ‘huios’ indicating spiritual maturity, as over against the word “teknon” which is the word John uses in 1 Jn. to talk about young children who are not yet full grown.

We also know that God's ultimate goal in this is that the overcomers within the Church will be His instrument to crush Satan;

(Rom. 16:20) "And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly."

This word should be translated 'swiftly' nor 'shortly'. The word is tachos and it doesn't mean 'soon', it means, "with swiftness (or speed)" – in other words, "done as quickly as is appropriate to the particular situation."

In Rev. 12:7-9 we're told that heaven will see Christ operating through His consort, His overcomers, directing Michael to cast Satan out of heaven;

"And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. 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."

Compare this with (1 Cor. 6:3) "Do you not know that we will judge angels?"

Here's a summary of this that Doug gave in a study he did;

"That's the final goal of the Church - God in Christ through the Holy Spirit crushing Satan under our feet, casting him down to the earth as we see in the book of Revelation, chapter 12. The Church is destined in the purpose and plan of God to displace Satan and the principalities and powers in the heavenlies - why? That's where our battle is; our fight is not with flesh and blood (Eph. 6). We have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ (Eph. 1:3)."

The next event John sees is this;

(Rev. 12:10-12) "Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, 'Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power (authority) of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. 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. 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.”

This is where we will get more personal in our application to us. The way in which the believers living in the Tribulation overcame the accuser is the same way *we* are to overcome him while we wait to be raptured.

I’m going to share Spark’s explanation of this;

“Let us ask what the nature of the devouring by the dragon is in Revelation 12:4. There we see the great red dragon standing waiting to devour the man-child the moment he is born. What is the character of the devouring? How will the dragon seek to devour? I do not think it would be an adequate answer to say that this is a way of describing a great persecution from without, a physical persecution of the saints. That is not an adequate explanation; because the Blood of the Lamb is *not* the ground upon which you overcome physical persecution. You *go through* physical persecution; you are not delivered out of it. You can appeal to the Blood of the Lamb as much as you like in the day of persecution *from without*, and the Blood of the Lamb does not avail to release you from it. There is a support *through it*. Now what is the nature of the devourer? The nature of the devourer is explained by the nature of the victory. ‘And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony...’ It may be outwardly that they suffer death, loving not their lives even unto death, but there is something inward which means that, even while they are delivered up unto death outwardly, they overcome spiritually.

Satan is the accuser. He is accusing us all the time before the Lord, just like he accused Job before God. When God challenged Satan with Job, he accused Job. Satan is always doing that. Whether his accusation is real or unreal, and unfortunately some things are real, but most of the times it is unreal. Because of his accusation, our conscience bothers us and we become weak spiritually.

How did they, and how to do we, overcome him? Revelation 12:11 tells us: ‘And they have overcome him by reason of the blood of the Lamb.’ That is the first thing. They knew the value of the blood, and they applied the blood upon their lives.

Please remember, in every age, the overcomers are not the special ones, the perfect ones. They are the same as we are, but they know the preciousness of the blood. When we say, 'The blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin', Satan disappears. He is the accuser, but we are no longer going down under his accusations.

The second thing is this, 'They loved not their lives even unto death' The word life here is soul-life. They may have died physically as well, but the emphasis in this verse is on the soul, not the body. The Lord Jesus calls us to deny ourselves, take up the cross and follow Him. These brothers and sisters denied themselves. They did not cater to their own desires, wishes or intentions; they were willing to lay down their soul-life and allow the life of Christ to rule their lives. They loved not their soul-life even unto death. And with that kind of attitude, the enemy is defeated. That is the secret of the overcomers. Praise God, this is an open secret. It is for every one of us."

In other words, their "testimony" is the same as the *meaning* of discipleship; to pick up our cross is to deny our self-life (or soul-life as Sparks puts it) for the sake of doing God's will over our own, whenever they are in conflict.

I know we all have certain things jump out to us when we read things like this. For me, it was a deep sense of gratitude that, in this age of grace in which we live now, to maintain our fellowship with the Lord in spite of our constant failures, sins and mistakes, all that is being asked of us, is that we agree with Him when it becomes apparent that we have done something we shouldn't have done.

That ongoing response of agreeing with Lord as we walk with Him keeps us in a perpetual state of fellowship and intimacy regardless of what the enemy would want us to believe through his accusations.

Until the blood of Christ was poured out for us, the only way the Old Testament nation of Israel could restore fellowship, when that fellowship was broken through sins, was to sacrifice an animal each year. And even then, it only rolled the sins forward, it never fully removed them.

(Heb. 10:1-4) "For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect (or upright). For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once cleansed, would have had no more consciousness of sins.

But in those sacrifices, there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.”

Only the blood of Christ can take away sin.

(1 Jn. 1:7-9) “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from *all* sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Walking in the light simply means not trying to excuse or hide our sin, but to willingly admit that the Lord is absolutely right.

And this is also what ‘confess’ means – it means agreeing with Him regarding whatever He points out to us.

(Amos 3:3) “How can two walk together unless they are agreed?”

Fellowship is walking hand-in-hand with the Lord and when sin threatens to break that apart, we agree, and we continue to walk forward with our hand still in His.

That’s grace – and it has the potential, if we believe it, to remove this constant “consciousness” or guilt of sin.

I want to share one other description, this time by DeVern Fromke, of this issue of the blood of Christ freeing us from condemnation;

“The blood is always effective in the legal or governmental realm. The Father has placed great value on the precious blood of His Son, and we must accept in confidence what that means to Him. Even the enemy recognizes this judicial significance of the blood. Wherever its covering is claimed or announced, it immediately becomes a garrison which all the hosts of darkness must honor. As we testify to the victory the glorious Emancipator has accomplished in the finished work of the Cross, we announce that this is our victory also. We allow our voice to cut the atmosphere where the enemy is ‘the prince of the power of the air.’ The testimony that overcomes stands on the ground of His Word; *our* testimony in full agreement with *His* testimony.”

Now, the last part of Rev. 12 focuses on Satan’s anger and persecution of the Tribulation saints;

(Rev. 12:14-17) “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. 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. 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. 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.”

Rev. 12:6 already touched on this;

“The woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.”

And our Lord prophesied about this in Matt. 24:15-22;

“Therefore, when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), ‘then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.’”

As we saw in another study when we looked at Daniel 12:11, the ‘abomination of desolation’ occurs at the mid-point of the Tribulation, just like we are seeing in Rev. 12. And that event initiates the final judgments of God which are the most severe of all.

The woman’s flight into the wilderness, to a place God has prepared for her, is what allows her to escape the wrath of the enemy.

God protects those in Israel who flee into the wilderness, where He sustains them for the second half of the tribulation.

I remember reading an article several years ago about the location of this ‘wilderness sanctuary’ and that Christians in Israel, familiar with the prophecy in Matt. 24, have been storing food and other supplies there in anticipation of the Tribulation, when they will be needed by those fleeing from Satan.

It’s pretty amazing to think that these Christian’s faith in the Matt. 24 prophecy was so real that they took action to help a future generation of Jewish believers.

Finally, as we’ll see next week, Revelation 13 reveals the two beasts Satan uses to persecute the believing remnant of Israel.

To close tonight I want to briefly revisit the wonder of what the Church is – what the Man Child of Rev. 12 represents.

These comments are from Eric Sauer. And, again, even though what he says should be shouted from every pulpit in America, along with a corporate, global John the Baptist style proclamation of the nearness of the Lord’s coming, it is unlikely these days that you will hear either of these truths taught in our churches. We are, after all, living in Laodicea.

Here’s what Sauer wrote;

“Those who believe in Christ in this Age belong to an entirely new world. Their life element is the Redeemer Himself, His grace is their strength, His cross is their glory. And because they are all organically joined to the same living Center, Christ, they form together a living unity, are one organism, infused by the same spirit of Christ. The Church is in Christ.

The Church is His body. She is ruled by His will, for the Head is the will of the body. From the Head comes her growth. The Church is the fullness of Him who fills all in all. That means that Christ, not as a Divine person, but in His humanity as the last Adam, would not be complete without His Eve. Without its fruit the corn of wheat would abide alone; a Redeemer without the redeemed. She is the full complement of Him Who brings to completion all things. She is the creaturely vessel of an eternal life born of God, a living prophetic setting forth of the great goal of redemption, ‘behold, the tabernacle of God is with men.’”