

The Book Of Revelation Study 58

Revelation 12:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ *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.*

² *Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.*

We have talked about the Woman here and found that she is Israel. Through whom the Messiah will come, or did come.

She is to give birth to the Savior of the world. The twelve stars are the twelve tribes of Israel.

What is God's view of Israel and the promises He has made to her?

Jeremiah 31:35-37 (NKJV)

³⁵ *Thus says the Lord, Who gives the sun for a light by day, The ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, And its waves roar (The Lord of hosts is His name):*

³⁶ *"If those ordinances depart From before Me, says the Lord, Then the seed of Israel shall also cease From being a nation before Me forever."*

³⁷ *Thus says the Lord: "If heaven above can be measured, And the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel For all that they have done, says the Lord.*

Often as an instrument of God's judgment, Satan has persecuted the Jewish people throughout their history. He knows that to destroy Israel would make it impossible for God to fulfill His promises to the Jewish people.

God will not allow him to do that, but will use Satan to chasten Israel.

It comes as no surprise that the devil will intensify his persecution of Israel as the establishment of the millennial kingdom draws near.

As previously noted, the seventh trumpet will sound near the end of the Tribulation. Only weeks, or perhaps a few months at the most, will remain after it sounds until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

With his time running out (V 12), Jewish people will become the special target of Satan's hatred and destructive attacks.

John saw that the **woman was clothed with the sun, and had the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.**

When we look at that description we remember the vision that Joseph had:

Genesis 37:9-11 (NKJV)

⁹ *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."*

¹⁰ *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?"*

¹¹ *And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind.*

In the image of Joseph's dream, the sun represents Jacob, the moon Rachel, and the eleven stars Joseph's brothers.

The allusion to Joseph's dream is fitting, since his life parallels Israel's history. Both endured the indignity of captivity in Gentile nations, yet were in the end delivered and exalted to a place of prominence in a kingdom.

That the **woman** was **clothed with the sun** reflects redeemed Israel's unique glory, brilliance, and dignity because of her exalted status as God's chosen nation.

Deuteronomy 7:6 (NKJV)

⁶ "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth."

Deuteronomy 14:2 (NKJV)

² For you are a holy people to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."

1 Kings 3:8 (NKJV)

⁸ And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted."

Psalms 33:12 (NKJV)

¹² Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, The people He has chosen as His own inheritance."

Psalms 106:5 (NKJV)

⁵ That I may see the benefit of Your chosen ones, That I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation, That I may glory with Your inheritance."

Isaiah 43:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ The beast of the field will honor Me, The jackals and the ostriches, Because I give waters in the wilderness And rivers in the desert, To give drink to My people, My chosen."

It also links her with Jacob (the sun in Joseph's dream), an heir in the Abrahamic covenant; Israel's continued existence as a nation reflects the ongoing fulfillment of that covenant

Genesis 12:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you."

² I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing."

The reference of **the moon under her feet** may be a further description of Israel's exalted status. It could also include the concept of God's covenantal relationship with Israel, since the moon was part of the cycle of Israel's required times of worship;

Numbers 29:5-6 (NKJV)

⁵ also one kid of the goats as a sin offering, to make atonement for you;

⁶ besides the burnt offering with its grain offering for the New Moon, the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings, according to their ordinance, as a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the Lord."

Nehemiah 10:33 (NKJV)

³³ *for the showbread, for the regular grain offering, for the regular burnt offering of the Sabbaths, the New Moons, and the set feasts; for the holy things, for the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and all the work of the house of our God.*

Psalms 81:3 (NKJV)

³ *Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon, At the full moon, on our solemn feast day.*

Isaiah 1:13-14 (NKJV)

¹³ *Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies-- I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting.*

¹⁴ *Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them.*

Colossians 2:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ *So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths,*

The **crown** (*stephanos*; the crown associated with triumph in the midst of suffering and struggle) of **twelve stars** (Joseph being the twelfth) on the woman's **head** refers to the twelve tribes of Israel.

Having described her attire, John noted her condition: **she was with child.**

That also is familiar Old Testament imagery describing Israel;

Isaiah 26:17-18 (NKJV)

¹⁷ *As a woman with child Is in pain and cries out in her pangs, When she draws near the time of her delivery, So have we been in Your sight, O Lord.*

¹⁸ *We have been with child, we have been in pain; We have, as it were, brought forth wind; We have not accomplished any deliverance in the earth, Nor have the inhabitants of the world fallen.*

Isaiah 66:7 (NKJV)

⁷ *"Before she was in labor, she gave birth; Before her pain came, She delivered a male child.*

That the woman is pregnant further confirms her identity as Israel;

Note: the church cannot be a mother since she is not yet married:

Revelation 19:7-9 (NKJV)

⁷ *Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."*

⁸ *And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*

⁹ *Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' " And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."*

2 Corinthians 11:2 (NKJV)

² *For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*

Being pregnant, the woman **cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth.**

Just like a pregnant woman in labor feels pain, so the nation of Israel was in pain, waiting for Messiah to come forth.

The cause of some of the pain is persecution by Satan, who attempts to destroy the mother.

The nation was in pain when the Messiah came the first time. So will it be at His second coming.

Ever since the first promise of a redeemer who would come to destroy Him (Gen 3:15), Satan has attacked Israel.

For centuries, Israel agonized and suffered, longing for the Child who would come to destroy Satan, sin, and death, and establish the promised kingdom.

No nation in history has suffered as long or as severely as Israel has both from God's chastening, and also from Satan's furious efforts to destroy the nation through whom the Messiah would come.

Having described the woman's agonizing labor pains, John introduces the cause of her suffering.

THE DRAGON

Revelation 12:3-4 (NKJV)

³ *And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.*

⁴ *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.*

With the second sign, a new character emerges on the scene;

The woman's mortal enemy, dramatically portrayed by **another sign that appeared in heaven.**

Revelation 12:9 (NKJV)

⁹ *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.*

This verse tells us who this dragon is. Satan himself

Satan here is not an actual dragon any more than Israel is an actual woman, but a malevolent spirit being, a fallen cherubim

The symbolic language here describing him pictures the reality of his person and character. Only in Revelation is Satan pictured as a dragon. This is a terrifying symbol. The word here used and translated dragon is in the old testament translated as monster, or sea monster. It pictures a large, ferocious, and terrifying animal.

Red, the color of fiery destruction and bloodshed, further stresses Satan's vicious, deadly, destructive nature.

Jesus said:

John 8:44 (NKJV)

⁴⁴ *You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.*

The Hebrew word for, "serpent (*nachash*) is used interchangeably in some texts with the Hebrew word for dragon (*tannin*)

Exodus 7:9 (NKJV)

⁹ *"When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, 'Show a miracle for yourselves,' then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your rod and cast it before Pharaoh, and let it become a serpent.' "*

In Genesis the word;

Genesis 3:1 (NKJV)

¹ *Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"*

So the animal Satan used in the Garden of Eden was a reptile, but one not yet cast down to its belly (Gen 3:14) Likely it was more upright, a dragon standing upon two legs, cursed to walk on four legs close to the ground, or slither like a snake

Red is a fitting color for the **dragon**, since he attacks both the woman and the child.

The **dragon** is further described as **having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems.**

He is depicted as a seven headed monster that rules the world.

Satan has been allowed by God to rule the world since the fall, and will continue to do so until the seventh trumpet sounds (*11:15*).

The **seven heads** with their **seven diadems** (diadema; royal crowns symbolizing power and authority) represent seven consecutive world empires running their course under Satan's dominion:
Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the Antichrist's future empire;

The final kingdom ruled by antichrist, will be a ten-nation confederacy;
The **ten horns** represent the kings who will rule under Antichrist

Revelation 17:12 (NKJV)

¹² *The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.*

Daniel 7:23-25 (NKJV)

²³ *"Thus he said: 'The fourth beast shall be A fourth kingdom on earth, Which shall be different from all other kingdoms, And shall devour the whole earth, Trample it and break it in pieces.*

²⁴ *The ten horns are ten kings Who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, And shall subdue three kings.*

²⁵ *He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand For a time and times and half a time.*

The shifting of the **diadems** from the dragon's **heads** to the beast's horns;

Revelation 13:1 (NKJV)

¹ *Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.*

Reveals the shifting of power from the seven consecutive world empires to the ten kings under the final Antichrist.

Satan's pervasive, evil influence is not limited to the human realm, but extended first into the angelic realm. In the picturesque language of John's vision, the dragon's **tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth.**

The references to the dragon's angels in verse 7 & 9 indicate that the **stars of heaven** are angels.

The genitive case offers further support for that interpretation;

They are **stars** belonging to **heaven**; that is their proper abode. Angels are depicted symbolically as **stars** elsewhere in the Scripture;

Revelation 9:1a (NKJV)

¹ Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth.

Job 38:7 (NKJV)

⁷ When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy?

When Satan fell he **swept away a third of the** angelic host with him. Along with their defeated leader those evil angels were cast from heaven **to the earth.**

It should be noted here that though he lost his dwelling place in heaven, Satan still has access to God in heaven and into His presence.

Revelation 12:10 (NKJV)

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

The next event in his dramatic vision unfolded, John noted that **the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.**

Throughout history, Satan has bent all of his efforts toward persecuting the people of God.

Abel was a righteous, obedient man; Satan prompted Cain to kill him.

1 John 3:12 (NKJV)

¹² Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.

Because they were a chosen people through whom the Messiah was to come, and by whom the good news of forgiveness was to be proclaimed, Satan reserved his special hatred for Israel.

After Joseph's death, the Israelites became slaves in Egypt. In that pace, the fates both of the nation and of its human deliverer hung by a slender thread.

From the human perspective, Pharaoh attempted to destroy the Israelites because he believed them to be a threat to his power.

But in reality, Pharaoh was an operative of Satan, who sought to wipe out the people from whom the Messiah would come.

It is also true to say that Satan is acting within the purposes of God for Israel.

The courage of the Hebrew midwives and God's sovereign protection of Moses, whom He would later use to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage, thwarted Satan's schemes.

During the period of the Judges, Satan used Israel's pagan neighbors in an attempt to destroy them. Yet God preserved His people, through all the assaults, raising up judges to rescue them from their oppressors.

Later Satan tried to use Saul to murder David and thus eliminate the messianic line;

1 Samuel 18:10-11 (NKJV)

¹⁰ And it happened on the next day that the distressing spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied inside the house. So David played music with his hand, as at other times; but there was a spear in Saul's hand.

¹¹ And Saul cast the spear, for he said, "I will pin David to the wall!" But David escaped his presence twice.

And we know the stories of the divided kingdom and how the line of David was twice dwindled down to one fragile child

Then later Haman was inspired to undertake the genocidal mission against the Jewish people as recorded in the book of Esther.

And then of course we know what Herod tried to do under the influence of Satan in having all the children killed after Jesus was born.

We begin to see and understand then how this description of Satan standing before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child fits the in with the historical record of Satan's activities.

Thus the first two characters in this vision are clearly portrayed and we will take up the third character when we come together for study in Revelation the next time.