

Revelation

Lesson 14

Chapter 12

With the sounding of the seventh trumpet , the revealed plan of God is completed and it is time for judgment day to occur for all people, including those who had been persecuting the Christians.

The events of Chapters 4-11 have given an overview, a summary of the things God is revealing to his people who are undergoing persecution. The purpose was to give them hope and encouragement to remain faithful throughout those events that were to come – NOT to reveal every event in the history of the world to them –that would be of no value to those to whom this letter was written. (Remember in Revelation 10:4 John was told NOT to write down certain things he heard after the sounding of the sixth trumpet! So we are NOT told everything that will happen during this time period)

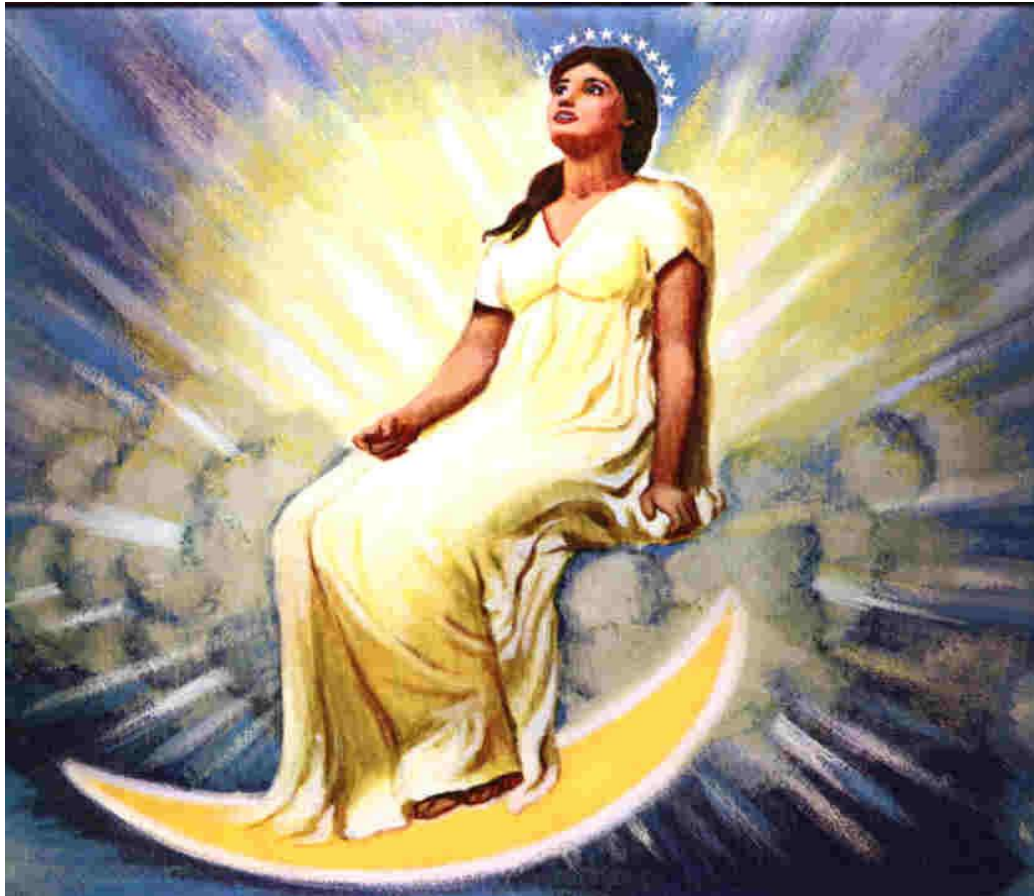
It was a common practice in Jewish writings to make a statement or describe events, and then go back afterwards and fill in details about the events. This is what is happening at this point in the book. The next few chapters return to the 'start' of the revelation and give more information about the events already described.

(Revelation is not a continuing narrative)

This is what was done in the book of Genesis – Chapter 1 gives us an 'overview' of the events of creation – then chapter two goes back over some of those same things giving more details about them. That is what is happening at this point in the book of Revelation – God is about to supply additional information about what was already revealed.

Revelation 12

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The woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet indicates that she is 'royalty' in God's view. She has a crown of 12 stars on her head. 12 is symbolic of 'religious completeness' and symbolic of the 12 tribes of Israel. (The nation of Israel is described as the wife of the Lord) She is about to give birth to the Savior (vs 5). So the woman symbolizes the faithful in the nation of Israel.



Isaiah 54:5

For your Maker is your husband— the LORD Almighty is his name— the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth.

Revelation 12:3-4

Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads. ⁴ Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that it might devour her child the moment he was born.



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The dragon, we are told in vs 9, is the devil. In Eastern cultures the devil is pictured as a 'dragon of chaos who came from the sea'. He is called 'Rahab' in Isa 51:9. The 'seven heads and seven crowns' is symbolic of 'royal complete power' on the earth and the 10 horns symbolize earthly leaders. So the dragon is in control of a great nation on the earth that is exercising control over things (Rome). The tail sweeping a third of the stars (physical nations and leaders) is symbolic of the power of this nation conquering a large part of the earth as God allowed.

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Some have seen 'in the tail sweeping a third of the stars from the sky' a reference to 'a third' of the angels following Satan and being cast to earth with him. (See vs 9) But the number (3, 1/3) is symbolic of this being orchestrated by God, and is not to be taken as a literal number. **Referring to Old Testament symbolism – the better explanation is the previous one- that the stars are symbolic of nations being conquered.**

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The dragon (Rome- controlled by Satan) is ready to devour the child. King Herod (Rome's representative) had the babies in Bethlehem killed in an effort to eliminate the Messiah, when he found out when and where Jesus was born.

Matthew 2:16

When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.

Revelation 12:5-6

She gave birth to a son, a male child, who “will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.” And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. ⁶ 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.

The male child is the Messiah who comes from the nation of Israel



Psalm 2:8-9 (Messianic prophecy)

I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.

⁹ You will break them with a rod of iron; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.

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The word translated ‘snatched up’ is the same word used in:

1 Thessalonians 4:17

After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.



Jesus is taken up to heaven to God’s right hand:

Mark 16:19

After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.



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The woman flees to the wilderness because of Satan’s persecution for 1260 days (the number also expressed as 42 months, or 3 ½ years) and is symbolic of a time of trouble and persecution for the faithful Jewish Christians.

This fleeing into the wilderness could represent the Jewish Christians being scattered by the persecution of Acts 11:19 as well as those who fled to actual wilderness areas like Cappadocia and Pella during the times of persecution before the fall of Jerusalem and after as persecutions increased.

Before the fall of Jerusalem, the Christians fled the city and went to Pella in the wilderness.



Mark 13:14 “When you see ‘**the abomination that causes desolation**’ standing where it does not belong—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Luke 21:20 says “when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies” – as the ‘abomination causing desolation’



One of the places to which Christians fled persecution was the area known as Cappadocia. It has soft volcanic rock (tuft) which can easily be hollowed out to make living quarters in hidden place of the mountains. The early Christians hid out here in underground places.



Revelation 12:7-9

Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. ⁸ But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. ⁹ The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

The ‘war’ in heaven is symbolic of the battle between God and Satan for control. Satan is no match for God and is cast to the earth where he tries to lead those astray who would follow God. Satan has angels who followed him (demons) .

1 Timothy 3:6

He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.

Revelation 12:10

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For **the accuser** of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

Satan is called the ‘accuser**’ – this indicates that one cause of the war in heaven was over who ‘owned’ those on the earth. Satan claimed that he did because of sin, (Remember it was Satan in the form of the serpent who deceived Eve into eating the forbidden fruit and giving it to Adam bringing sin into the world) (Satan says “I own them, they listened to me”) but God rightfully claims that He owns us as the creator and that He has the right to redeem us (buy us out of Satan’s control) because of the price paid by Jesus on the cross.**

Revelation 12:10-11

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. ¹¹ They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

The blood of Jesus paid the sin price and the faithful obedience of those Christians proved that they belong to God. Even Satan’s greatest threat – death – did not cause them to be unfaithful to the Lord.

Hebrews 9:14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Revelation 12: 11-12

¹¹ They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

¹² Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.

Those on the earth now have to deal with an angry defeated devil who knows what his fate will be – the lake of fire (eternal condemnation)

Matthew 25:41

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Revelation 12:13-17

When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. ¹⁴ The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach. ¹⁵ Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. ¹⁶ But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. ¹⁷ Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God's commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus.

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The time, times, and half a time are another way of saying 3 ½ years, 42 months, or 1260 days – the same symbolic time of trouble and persecution. God cares for His people who flee to the wilderness.

The reference to the dragon spewing water out his mouth is a part of the Eastern idea of Satan being represented by a dragon from the sea – he is able to spew water like a river, but the earth (under the control of God) prevents him from harming God's people.

(Interesting fact – volcanic tuff (Cappadocia) is water resistant)

Revelation 12:17

Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God’s commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus.

The dragon (Satan) now turns his attention to ‘the rest of her children’ – these would be the Christians being taught the gospel all over the world (Gentile Christians). Satan’s goal is to get them to deny Christ and he will use all sorts of deceptions, persecutions, threats, and pressures to try to accomplish this goal.

So Satan at first persecuted the Jewish Christians, causing them to be scattered, but then the gospel spreads to all peoples (the Gentiles) as a result.

So Revelation 12 tells the Christians symbolically that the cause of their being persecuted comes from the anger of the devil against God. And while they had to flee to survive the persecution of those the devil was using and controlling, that God would continue to care for them throughout this time of trial and trouble. Remember – the whole purpose of the book is to encourage the Christians to remain faithful in spite of what was happening and what was to come – and to point out that it is still all under the control of God and that they will be rewarded in the end.

Next, in Revelation 13, the devil is shown as giving his power to human government (Roman) leaders to do his bidding.