

Revelation – Chapter 12

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Because certain expressions are used in this chapter that ordinarily apply to our Lord Jesus, the tendency is to suppose they do have a reference to Him. For instance Verse 5, “And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.” The name “Michael” is mentioned in verse 7, a title we have come to recognize—one that means “Who as God.” In Dan. 12:1, “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people.” The Prophet is here referring to the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. While these various titles of Rev. 12 do belong to our Lord, yet as used in this chapter, they do not apply to our Lord Jesus, they are not references to Him.

Verse 1, “And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.” The expression “woman” symbolizes a church separate from her Lord. The Apostle in 2 Cor. 11:2 writes, “I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” This woman, “clothed with the sun” represents the Gospel Church covered with the precious promises of God—the marvelous light of Truth.

The literal moon reflects the light of the sun—the Jewish Law is symbolized by the moon. The Law was a shadow of the reflection of the Gospel light. Mind you “The Law” was light—but not the real—only reflected light. The woman was not under the law, symbolized by the moon—she was under grace—SUNLIGHT; yet the true church, “The Woman” was supported by the TEACHINGS OF THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS. And upon “her head, a crown of twelve stars.” These were the twelve apostles and we note that there were only twelve, as our Lord stated in John 6:70, “Have I not chosen you twelve?”

Verse 2 tells us that “she,” the woman of verse one, “being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.” Let us keep in mind that the church did not bring forth our Lord Jesus—rather He brought forth the church. In Heb. 6:20 we read, “Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.” The Apostle speaks of Jesus in Eph. 1:22 as the “HEAD” of the church. VS. 22 and 23, “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” The same Apostle, in his letter to the Colossians, chapter 1, Verse 18 (Diaglott) says, “He is also the head of the body of the congregation, who is the beginning, the First-born from the dead, that he might become Pre-eminent among us.”

The only arrangement that we know of where the church brought forth a man-child,

would be in the case of Papacy. The Papacy did not come into existence for several centuries after the Lord and the Apostles had founded the church.

The great “Red Dragon” of V. 3 represents the Pagan Roman Empire. The Seven Heads would represent the successive and distinct FORMS of government that Rome had. The ten horns would be the divisions of power; and apparently these ten horns are mentioned to identify Rome as the same beast or government described by the prophet Daniel in chapter 7.

Time-wise “the woman” would be at the beginning of the 4th century. She is in the “Smyrna” state of the church recorded in Rev. 2:8-10, “And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write...” The name Smyrna means BITTER, evidently fitting to the experiences of the church at that time. We notice in verses 9 and 10 that the Lord says, “I know thy works and tribulation”—a reference evidently to the special tribulations of that day. He also says to the Smyrna state of the church (V. 10), “Behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried and ye shall have tribulation ten days.” Again this is a reference to the special persecutions of the Smyrna state of the church—bitter persecutions. These bitter persecutions come from the “Dragon” the Roman Empire. This continual persecution caused some to relax in their stand for the Truth.

A spirit or desire to please, to get into favor with the persecuting “Dragon” comes over some of the bright ones in the church; and so we read (V. 4) “the tail of the dragon drew the third part of the Stars [bright ones] of heaven” (of the church). These became followers or servants of Rome—a compromise was in process. We note that these were cast to the “EARTH.” They were degraded by this move—the stars of heaven had their heavenly vision dimmed.

We remember our studies in the 2nd and 3rd Volumes—“The Man of Sin” in Volume 2; and “The Days of Waiting” in Volume 3. We learned that this desire (in the church) for the favor of Rome was fulfilled by the conversion of Constantine in A.D. 313. It was here that the “labor pains” of tribulation ceased and Papacy was born. What really happened? There the blending of church and state began. It was not yet the “Man of Sin”—it was the beginning of what resulted in Papacy—“The Man of Sin” the man CHILD was BORN.

We would like to read a few lines from Volume II, page 286, quoting from Lord’s “Old Roman World”: “It was not till the Fourth Century—when imperial persecution had stopped; when [the Roman Emperor] Constantine was converted; when the Church was allied with the State; when the early faith was itself corrupted; when superstition and vain philosophy had entered the ranks of the faithful; when bishops became courtiers; when churches became both rich and splendid; when synods were brought under political

influence; when monasticism [monks] had established a false principle of virtue; when politics and dogmatics went hand in hand, and emperors enforced the decrees of [church] councils—that men of rank entered the Church. When Christianity became the religion of the court and of the fashionable classes, it was used to support the very evils against which it originally protested.”

Roman favor was so sweet to the church after so many years of persecution. They were now ready to make religion over and everything to suit the views of their new Friend Constantine. With his favor, the open opposition of others in great measure ceased. And when millions were brought into the church at that time—it was certainly in name only. How could the work of the Adversary bring forth good seed? How fitting are the words of our Lord in Matt. 13:24-30, “Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The Kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.”

The latter part of verse 4 states, “and the Dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered for to devour her child as soon as it was born.” Pagan Rome and Papacy were at odds—in Daniel’s prophecy concerning this great counterfeit system he says (7:7) that he saw a fourth beast that was diverse from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns—similar to what is stated in Rev. 12:3. In V. 8 of Dan. 7, the prophet refers to that peculiar “Little Horn”—not only in V. 8, but in other verses also. Pagan Rome as a Horn or power was opposed to Papacy, as a horn or power. So while Pagan Rome was ready to devour the start of Papacy (as the 4th verse suggests), yet it did not succeed in doing this.

Verse 5 states, “and she brought forth a Man Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron and her child was caught up unto God and His Throne.” We would say that this was a premature birth. The Church knew that the promise of the Lord was that He would end her persecutions by delivering her. The Church knew also that she was to be exalted to the control of all the kingdoms of the world. Evidently some were so pleased with the favors of Rome that they deceived themselves into believing that God would in this way give them the kingdoms of the world as promised. WHAT A DECEPTION!

The church was persecuted and reviled constantly—she was under pressure—“pained to be delivered.” She longed for the completion of the promised “seed of the woman” that should bruise the serpent’s head. The anxiety and desire in this direction produced the premature birth. This was the “man of sin” referred to in 2 Thess. 2:3.

This male child, or man child was a weak one at first—the process of being “caught up to God and to His throne” was a gradual one. This man child was gradually exalted to the positions and titles, the homage and praise of the true seed. Within 300 years he did “rule the nations with a rod of iron” as stated in V. 5.

We will skip verse 6 for this time and note verse 7. There was war in heaven—Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels, or messengers. There was this controversy—this conflict between the two elements—the church and the empire. This conflict went on for some time—whenever the male child or son of the church attempted to take the ascendant position. As we know, the Papacy did win out and succeeded marvelously in controlling the affairs of earth.

Some may suppose that the term “Michael” here is a rather forced construction to apply it to Papacy. Let us keep in mind what the expression means—as already referred to, it means “Who As God.” While this expression is used in Daniel 12, and applied to our Lord Jesus—we see from that account that literal events are referred to—the resurrection, the Time of Trouble, and so on. In this account of Rev. 12 we have symbols used such as: woman, dragon, tail, stars, horns. It would seem to be out of order to have a literal Michael fight a symbolic dragon. As we consider the meaning of the word “Michael”—“Who As God,” we note Paul’s words in 2 Thess. 2:4. Speaking of the “Man of Sin” he says, “Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called god or that is worshipped; so that He As God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” We see the connection of this statement by Paul and the meaning of the title “Michael.” Let us read two paragraphs of page 308 in the Second Volume, “Who art thou?—The High-Priest, the Supreme Bishop. Thou art the Prince of Bishops, thou art the Heir of the Apostles. Thou art Abel in Primacy, Noah in government, Abraham in patriarchal rank, in order Melchisedec, in dignity Aaron, in authority Moses, Samuel in judicial office, Peter in power, Christ in Unction. Thou art he to whom the keys of heaven are given, to whom the sheep are entrusted. There are indeed other door-keepers of heaven, and other shepherds of the flocks; but thou art the more glorious in proportion as thou hast also, in a different fashion, inherited before others both these names... The power of others is limited by definite bounds, thine extends even over those who have received authority over others. Canst thou not, when a just reason occurs, shut up heaven against a bishop, depose him from the episcopal office, and deliver him over to Satan? Thus thy privilege is immutable, as well in the keys committed to thee as in the sheep intrusted to thy care.”

“All these blasphemously flattering titles have been applied to and received by the Roman pontiffs with complacency and marked satisfaction, as rightfully belonging to them.”

Verse 3 self-explanatory—the Dragon is mentioned last in verse 7. Verse 8 says he was lost in the conflict. Verse 9, “And the great Dragon was cast out.” Rome as we stated, lost in the conflict. The verse goes on to say, “That old serpent called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” This could be the view that Papacy had toward Pagan Rome; or as suggested by the Pastor on page 258, Volume I—we quote, “To this fourth beast, representing Rome, Daniel gives no descriptive name. While the others are described as lion-like, bear-like and leopard-like, the fourth was so ferocious and hideous that none of the beasts of earth could be compared with it. John the Revelator, seeing in vision the same symbolic beast (government), was also at a loss for a name by which to describe it, and finally gave it several. Among others, he called it ‘the Devil.’ (Rev. 12:9) He certainly chose an appropriate name: for Rome, when viewed in the light of its bloody persecutions, certainly has been the most devilish of all earthly governments. Even in its change from Rome Pagan to Rome Papal it illustrated one of Satan’s chief characteristics; for he also transforms himself to appear as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14), as Rome transformed itself from Heathenism and claimed to be Christian—The Kingdom of Christ.”

The change from “Rome Pagan to Rome Papal” as referred to in this quote from Volume I is described in this 12th chapter of Revelation. We recall the words of Daniel 7:8 and 25: “That the peculiar little horn had a mouth speaking great things;” and “he [Papacy] shall speak great words against the Most High.” In verses 10 to 12 of Revelation 12 we have some of these great words or claims. The 10th verse begins, “I heard a loud voice saying in heaven”—then comes the claims of that system—“Now is come salvation and strength and the Kingdom of our God, and the Power of His Christ”—they claimed to be the only means of salvation. “For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God, day and night”—again one of Papacy’s claims, that their victory was the result of the firm stand of the Smyrna stage of the church, which just previously had suffered so much persecution. “Therefore, rejoice ye heavens [let Papacy and all connected therewith] rejoice”—they had the power of spiritual control represented by the expression “heavens.”

Verse 11 is just another claim coming from the loud voice—“they had overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto death.”

Verse 12, “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.” As the church had once been persecuted when Paganism reigned, so now when she reigns, she makes the Pagans and heretics suffer. Papacy claims this as their Millennial reign during which it broke in pieces the kingdom with a rod of iron.

Verse 13, “And when the Dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.” The Dragon does represent Rome—the same Dragon has various heads as verse 3 shows us. Here in Verse 13 it has fully taken on its head—Papacy; it’s the same Rome under a new rulership or head. The same power—the empire and its army which had previously persecuted the church, now, under this new ruler, it persecutes Pagans and heretics. The Pagans would be those completely separate from religion and any claim to be Christians. These now were pressured to join the church, even if in name only. The heretics would be the “true church”—those who did not adhere to the Papal teachings.

And here is where verses 6 and 14 come in. V. 6, “And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.” Or the 1260 years of Papacy’s power to persecute. V. 14, “And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and a half a time, from the face of the serpent.” A time would be 360 symbolic days or years; times would be double that or 720 years; and ½ a time would be 180. These all add up to the 1260 years once again. Both verses: 6 and 14 refer to this 1260 year period. Both verses refer to a wilderness condition that the woman flies to.

The “wilderness” would seem to symbolize disrespect, an outcast condition. The Lord left the church in the wilderness condition, saying to them: “In the world ye shall have tribulation; marvel not if the world hate you.” The promise from the Lord was that in due time He would come again and take her out of the wilderness condition—to a place of glory in the Kingdom with Himself. It was not wrong for the church to long for the new conditions promised by Her Lord—the problem came in the attempt to establish them for herself.

When this great apostasy got under way, some of the church were quite aware of its Babylonish condition. To these were given the two wings of a great eagle—apparently these two wings mean the same thing as the two witnesses of Rev. 11:3—references to the old and new testaments—the Word of God.

Verses 15 and 16 refer to a time—near the close of the 1260 years; the time of the French Revolution around 1789. A flood of water, or water as a flood is said to proceed from the

mouth of the serpent. Water represents truth here as elsewhere even though it comes forth from the dragon or serpent. The thought conveyed here is that truth would issue forth from an evil source, and with an evil intent. The French Revolution was instigated by many hard truths regarding priest-craft and the individual rights and liberties of all people. “And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.” The “earth” in symbol, represents society, order-loving people; and it is a fact of history that the flood of truth which spread over France—was swallowed up, or absorbed by the people of Europe. . . . Thus the “woman” the reformed and progressing Church of God, was helped, spared from being overwhelmed, and liberty and truth stepped out to prominence before men; and from that time forward the spirit of liberty and God’s Word have led all who were willing to follow, into more and more light and truth. (See Volume III, page 67)