

CHAPTER TWELVE

INTRODUCTION:

Chapter 12 begins with several powerful images: a dragon hovering over a woman about to give birth, a battle on high resulting in the dragon's expulsion from heaven, then a loud voice declaring victory through the blood of the Lamb. Then, in upcoming chapters, Satan's beasts will be called from the abyss and the plagues of the seven angels will occur. In chapter 16, we'll be taking our third journey through time until the end of the world, but for now let's focus on the images introduced here and continuing through the next four chapters (12-15). By doing so, we will be much better prepared for that final trip through time in chapter 16, with a clearer understanding of what is transpiring, not to mention the exciting things that follow after.

In chapter 12 the conflict between individual Christians and Satan escalates to the point that in the last verse of the chapter it is said, "*...the dragon was wrath with the woman and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*" That battle between the powers of Heaven and hell becomes a full-fledged all out war between right and wrong in chapter 16 -- the famed battle of Armageddon. But still, even in the midst of this powerful struggle, there is encouragement and support for the Christian and an even stronger assurance that the powers of Satan will be overthrown.

Back in chapter 4, John's vision vividly described the "Throne Scene", in which the Creator of all that exists reigned on a Heavenly Throne. An emerald-like aura bathed the area. We saw the twenty-four elders, the four living creatures, and the scroll sealed with 7 seals given to the Lamb that had been slain (Jesus Christ) – the only one worthy to unseal it. That "Throne Scene" set the stage for the visions that followed: the opening of the seals, the sealing of the 144,000 and the great multitude, the golden censer, the sounding of the seven trumpets, and the Angel and the little scroll. At the close of chapter 11 the vision culminated with the Two Witnesses, and the sounding of the seventh and final trumpet. All of those things occur during the same period of time: from the establishment of the church until the end of days, as we have stated multiple times. We have viewed that period of time twice now: first with the vision of the

## A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Fourteen

seven seals, **focusing primarily on those who were deemed righteous**, and again with the vision of the seven trumpets, **with our focus shifting to the unrighteous**.

Between now and the third journey in chapter 16, we will be treated to a “behind the scenes” view of the events that lead to the final war called Armageddon. Once again our primary focus will shift; this time **from individual conflicts with Satan and his enticements, to the overall war raging on the earthly battlefield between Satan and God**. To properly understand these events, though, we must go back in time to just before the birth of Christ. That requires a new “setting” for what leads up to the Throne Scene from chapter 4. This new setting is heaven in the time shortly before Jesus is born to Mary. As we watch from this new setting, we will encounter characters and events that will need identifying. Read the text as you allow the scene to form in your mind. Afterwards, we will discuss it.

### **THE TEXT OF THE WOMAN AND THE DRAGON: Revelation 12:1 – 9**

*“And a great sign was seen in heaven: a woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars; and she was with child; and she crieth out, travailing in birth, and in pain to be delivered. And there was seen another sign in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads seven diadems. And his tail draweth the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon standeth before the woman that is about to be delivered, that when she is delivered he may devour her child. And she was delivered of a son, a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and unto his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that there they may nourish her a thousand two hundred and threescore days. And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels; and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is*

## A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Fourteen

*called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him.”*

There were four primary characters in this scene, so let's see if we are all on the same page as to whom they represent and then discuss a few other things relating to them. Of course you had little trouble identifying the **Great Red Dragon**. Verse 9 makes it clear when it refers to him as, “... *that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceives the whole world...*” The phrase “*that old serpent*” also places him in the Garden of Eden, where he tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. It is through him that sin was introduced into the world, and he has been an active enemy of all who would hold to truth and righteousness ever since! He is familiarly known as “The Devil” or “Satan.” The meaning of those two names provides some insight into the character of this old serpent: The term “*devil*” comes from the Greek word “diabolos,” from which we get the word “diabolical.” When called by that name, he is defined as a “*false accuser or slanderer*”. When we use the other term “*Satan*,” from the Greek word “Satanas,” we see he is an “*adversary – one who opposes another in purpose or act,*” often referred to in scripture as an “enemy” or a “deceiver” of Christians. By putting together the two definitions, we more or less get the Dragon’s “job description:” to be our enemy, a slanderer and a deceiver, and also the prince of the demons, the author of evil, a persecutor of good people. His overall plan is to alienate good people from God.

The next character, the **offspring of the woman**, is equally easy to identify. He is the “...*Man Child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron’ and He ascended to heaven, unto God and to His throne.*” Don’t overlook the pronoun indicating whose throne He was to occupy: it was His throne! Can there be any doubt that this “man child” is the Christ?

Then, in verse 7, we see a third character called “**Michael**,” but we don’t know much about him. Most commentators believe his name comes from the Hebrew word “Micah” which means “*who is like God,*” and he is thought to be the same Michael mentioned three times in the book of Daniel as one who stood for the people against their enemies. In Jude 9, we see a Michael mentioned as one who “*contended with the devil*” over the body of Moses, and in

## A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Fourteen

Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, 4:16, we see an archangel named Michael. If all of these are referring to the same individual as most commentators think they are, then Michael may be the highest ranking of all the angels, and rightfully titled an "Archangel." Some historians believe the Israelites had a "guardian angel" named Michael. We can't be sure the Michael of Revelation 12 is one and the same – the Archangel – but perhaps he is.

The fourth character is **the woman giving birth**. At first glance, her identity seems obvious, but in fact, she is the source of quite a bit of controversy. The two most prevalent views are that she either represents the Church, or the actual mother of Jesus. Those that believe she is Mary view this small section of Revelation as literal rather than symbolic, a parallel passage to the Gospel accounts of the birth of Jesus, with Herod as the tool of the devil.

Those who believe the woman represents the church quickly point to verse 17 to refute the Mary claim. Verse 17 plainly states that the rest of her seed (*Mark 6:3 and Matthew 13:55-56 each list 4 brothers and a plurality of sisters born to Mary after Jesus was born.*) ***“keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”*** Their argument is, “Can it be said for certain that all of them believed Jesus was the Messiah?” Of course we know James did, but we are not told about the others. There are some who take the position that all of Jesus' siblings eventually believed in Jesus as the Christ, but since it isn't documented, many commentators tend to shy away from this idea.

Therefore, we appear to be left with only one option – she must represent the Church! Those who hold this view present as proof the very same verse 17 they used to disprove her being Mary: her seed ***“keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”*** I can't get past the most obvious reason why this view cannot be true. It is almost universally agreed that the offspring of the woman is Jesus, so if the woman giving birth represents the church, then the church would have to have been in existence before Christ was born! I don't need to tell you that that is wrong. One of the purposes for Jesus coming to earth was to establish His kingdom. That kingdom is the church and it came into existence BECAUSE

## A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Fourteen

OF and AFTER the shedding of Christ's blood on the cross. So, the woman cannot represent the Church.

Let me present a third view which I believe is far more credible than either of the previous ones: she represents **the remnant of the faithful, still holding fast to God's word at that time** (*the 400 year period between the testaments up to the birth of Jesus*). I base that view on information from Isaiah 66 where the prophet speaks of the holy city, Jerusalem, representing a woman about to give birth. Earlier in that chapter Isaiah says, ***"He looks with favor on those who are humble and contrite in spirit and those who tremble at His word."*** Later he says, ***"He will extend peace like a river to the woman because she nurses her children, comforts them and carries them on her arm. And when you see this you rejoice and flourish."*** Then Isaiah ends the chapter with these words: ***"As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the Lord, "so will your name and descendants endure."***

Remember, we are told in Judges 2 that there was a period after the death of Joshua when a generation grew up that didn't know about the miracles of crossing the Red Sea or the Jordan River on dry land. It is said that they ***"didn't know God."*** Some of the Israelites were given over to idolatry, and they did not teach their children about God and His miracles. But even during that period, there were some who ***"held fast to God's word."*** Because of this God raised up "judges" to lead the people back to God. The Law of Moses was not complete because it was designed for a select group of people: direct blood descendants of Abraham. Those born outside that blood – unable to trace their lineage back to Abraham – were not accepted by those who could, and were viewed as "Gentiles," a term essentially meaning "born outside the blood of Abraham." As the writer of the book of Hebrews says, ***"If the Law of Moses had been perfect then there would be no need of the new."*** Jesus came into the world to remove that "Old Law" and establish a "New Covenant" that could save ALL of mankind, and that new covenant came through that remnant in the lineage of Abraham who ***"held fast to God's word!"*** In order to ultimately save that remnant as well as all of mankind, Jesus was required to be the sacrifice for them by shedding His blood on the cross.

## A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Fourteen

Taking into consideration the symbolism of Revelation, along with what we read in Isaiah about the “*remnant that would remain faithful*”, I believe the woman represents that “remnant” – those who remained steadfast through the perils and trials of life. Before Jesus was born, that category was only a small percentage of what had once been a great people. Their numbers had dwindled through the years as their faith wavered. Before Jesus’ birth, I suspect that remnant must have been at its lowest point – the dip in the curve, if you will. But during Jesus’ ministry, His followers grew in number, and after the church was established in the book of Acts, chapter 2, it grew even more as the Apostles continued teaching. Many, if not all of that remnant of faithful Jews believed and obeyed the gospel that was being taught, and became a part of the church of God (the Kingdom that Jesus established) and once again grew into a great people! That church did not exist, though, until after Christ’s death and resurrection! Therefore, in the vision we are presently discussing we must look upon this woman NOT as the church, but simply the remnant of faithful believers in God that existed in the period between the testaments and before Jesus’ birth. .

With the identities out of the way, let’s take a closer look at the text and see what’s there: First, we see the statement “*...there appeared a great wonder in heaven*” or as the Revised Version puts it, “*and a great sign was seen.*” This “wonder” or “sign” consists of what is contained in the first two verses: “*a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She is ‘with child’ and she cried during the travailing of birth, and pained to be delivered.*” This woman then, the representative of the faithful remnant, is about to give birth to the promised Messiah, through whom all prophecies will soon be fulfilled. She is said to be “*travailing in birth and pained to be delivered*”. In other words, the moment is near! It is further mentioned that she is “*clothed with the sun*” which, as the brightest of all lights, is a symbol of God’s righteousness. She was therefore a true believer and follower of God. She will look to Him and His word for guidance, and she will nurture the child as a loving mother and a faithful servant of the Lord God. She has “*the moon under her feet.*” The moon is the symbol of changing times and seasons, so it being “*under her feet,*” indicates stability, implying that her offspring will remain stable – unfailingly carrying out His purpose – throughout the changes that are about to happen. She wears on her head a “*crown*

## A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Fourteen

*of twelve stars.*” The word translated “crown” is that same one applied to the crowns worn by the 24 elders in the throne scene – the “*stephanos*” indicating victory. The twelve stars are generally used as a symbol of stable, confident leaders or people of authority, but a secondary meaning often applied to a star is “teacher.” Of course, our minds immediately go to the twelve apostles who were the first teachers and leaders in this New Kingdom that Jesus established, so it could be that both meanings are applied in this verse: she is wearing a crown of victory, studded with Christian teaching! Unto this remnant of faithful followers of God, a child is about to be born – the heir of victory that is unwaveringly stable, who will carry out His purpose of bringing the light of God’s word to the whole world. He is the Messiah promised all through the ages and His time is near!

Then we see another wonder in heaven:  
*“A great dragon having seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns upon his heads.”* The word “dragon” appears a total of 19 times in the bible: six in the Old Testament and thirteen in the New Testament – all in the book of Revelation. I suspect most of us pictured a literal giant red dragon with wings, seven heads and crowns, and ten horns similar to this artist’s depiction – but



that is not the image we are intended to see. Remember the scene that was described in chapter one when we were introduced to Jesus. His head and hair were said to be white like wool, his eyes like a flame of fire, his voice like many waters. His feet were like burnished bronze, and out of His mouth came a two-edged sword. As we discussed, that symbolism was intended to confuse the minds of the “uninformed,” yet allow those Christians to understand Jesus’ traits.

All those things actually told the Christians that Jesus was royalty, full of heavenly glory, purity and holiness! He could look into the hearts and souls of men to discern their thoughts and intentions. And He could tread underfoot the wicked, as well as judge and convict those not up to His standard! That same type of symbolism is being used here in regard to the devil with the intent to cloud the meaning. Satan is, of course, not really a big red dragon, but the symbolism

## A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Fourteen

helps us understand his character. Typically, we picture a dragon as a menacing, dangerous creature able to destroy or devour us. He is depicted here as being red, a color which enhances his terrible appearance and serves as an indicator of his murderous and destructive character. He is described as having **“seven heads and ten horns.”** We know the symbolism connected to those numbers: the number 7 indicates completeness and the number 10 multiplies his power. The idea put forth here is that the devil has the full and complete power of his kingdom focused against the soon to be born man-child and the kingdom He will establish. Satan will “pull out all the stops,” do everything he can to overpower each individual Christian and destroy the church as a whole!

John continues his description of the dragon: he **“has seven crowns upon his heads.”** In all the previous visions in Revelation, the Greek word used for “crown” has always been *“stefanos,”* meaning a “crown of victory,” but that is not the case here. Satan will NOT be victorious in his efforts to destroy the church, but he is the leader of all that is against God, so in this instance the Greek word translated “crown” is *“diadem,”* which originally meant “a band to bind a turban,” but over time took on the meaning of a “kingly ornament for the head.” It has nothing to do with victory, but simply indicates a person of authority, or even in some cases, a leader of an army. In this instance, it denotes his power as “prince of the world,” in which he is allowed full control over his followers as well as those in the abyss, but a promise of victory over the armies of God? Not a chance.

It is said that his tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and cast them down to the earth. It is universally agreed that the **“stars of heaven”** represent the angels, but don’t read into this verse the idea that the dragon convinced a literal one-third of the angels to follow him and revolt against God and the other angels. The suggestion is that, while some did fall away, the vast majority remained faithful to God! Some scholars believe at one point Satan was an archangel, equal with Michael, but he desired to have more honor or status and rebelled against God. (*See note below regarding this belief*). So, the remainder of the chapter is generally considered to be the account of Satan’s rebellious conduct in effecting the fall of other angels along with himself – except for verses 5 and 6. In these 2 verses, John pauses to assure us that the dragon failed in



## A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Fourteen

his attempt to devour the child and hurt the woman. Even though he is poised before her, ready to consume the child as soon as he is born, the woman manages to give birth to a man-child that will ***“rule all nations with a rod of iron,”*** and immediately that child is ***“caught up unto God”*** and the woman flees ***“into the wilderness”*** to a place prepared by God where she is fed and nurtured for 1,260 days. You already know I’m going to say not to take the 1,260 days literally (as I also mentioned with the 2 witnesses previously). It is that symbolic “three and a half” that indicates a period when things are “less than perfect.”

There are several accounts in the bible where the wilderness was used as **protection from harm**. You may remember that Moses fled from the Pharaoh into the wilderness then later led Israel out of Egypt by crossing the Red Sea on dry land ...into the wilderness. The great prophet Elijah fled from the wrath of Ahab & Jezebel into the wilderness, and the apostle Paul went into the wilderness for a period of time before he began his ministry. But remember, this is an apocryphal vision, not literal. The woman described in these verses is not a literal woman, but a representative of the faithful “remnant” of the followers of God. Therefore we should not believe the remnant literally “fled into the wilderness,” but rather that God protected it from harm during that period of time when things were “less than perfect.” This would be, roughly, the first century – from the birth of Christ until some point after the church was established. Remember, Herod the Great had James killed and Peter arrested with intent to kill him. While there were certainly Christian martyrs during this time, God did protect the church as a whole. It is stated that they were in ***“a place prepared of God”*** which I take to mean they were under God’s protection there.

In verse 7, John returns to the scene of the red dragon in heaven when he says, ***“And there was war in heaven.”*** Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels. Notice the use of the past tense, indicating the war has already occurred. Verse 8 assures us that Satan did not prevail:

***“And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him.”***

## A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Fourteen

These verses can be difficult to understand if we allow our minds to form literal pictures of that mentioned in the text. We must keep constantly before us the fact that this is an apocryphal book, painting a deliberately blurry picture intended to hide the truth from those who would harm the intended recipients.

In the six verses that begin this chapter we have seen a great wonder in heaven, a woman about to give birth. Then another wonder in heaven: a great dragon standing before the woman ready to devour her child as soon as it was born. We are told in verse 4 that the dragon's tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth, but the dragon himself was in heaven standing before the woman. We were told in verse 5 that the woman delivered a man child we know to be Jesus, and that He was caught up to God and to His throne before the dragon could devour Him.

Now, here in verse 7, a war occurs in heaven with Michael and his angels standing against the dragon and his angels. The dragon loses the war, can no longer live in heaven, and is cast down into earth with his angels. I underlined the many references to heaven in these verses to help us focus on the truth we are being shown here. Even though the word is mentioned 6 times, I don't believe any of those 6 instances are talking about the dwelling place of God! The Greek word that is translated "heaven" in all of those places is "*ouranos*" which Thayer defines as, "**the vaulted expanse of the sky with all things visible in it.**" He continues by saying that even though it can refer to the "**universe, or the world,**" it most commonly means "**the aerial heavens or the sky... that region where the clouds and the tempests gather, and where thunder and lightning are produced.**"

Thayer also recognizes that there is another accepted definition of "*ouranos*": **the dwelling place of God, where the seat of order and things eternal and consummately perfect exist.** So, it is left up to us to use the context to distinguish which definition may be applied: Considering the events of chapter 12 as our context, his last definition "**the seat of order of things eternal and consummately perfect**" CANNOT be the meaning implied here. In this chapter we see war, discord, the evil dragon and his angels – events which are not at all

## A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Fourteen

congruent with the “**eternal order and consummately perfect**” that exists where God dwells. That is the heaven of the Throne Scene: an ideal setting, a perfect place where God dwells, no discord, pain, sorry or sadness... But, the heaven we see six times in the first nine verses of chapter 12 is NOT that place. Incidentally, there is a clue tightly packed within those verses that comes right out and tells us that this is not the heaven where God lives, but it is often overlooked. Read verse 5 again. Do you see it? We have already been shown in verses 1 and 3 that these events are taking place in “heaven,” yet in verse 5 when the child is born, that verse says the child was “caught up” to... where? “**Unto God and His throne!**” So, even though this was taking place “in heaven,” it was necessary for the child to be “caught UP unto God.”

Therefore, the events described in chapter 12 were not happening in the realm of God, but elsewhere as Thayer said, in “*the aerial heavens or the sky... that region where the clouds and the tempests gather, and where thunder and lightning are produced.*” It doesn’t matter whether we are speaking of the atmosphere, the troposphere, the stratosphere, or even “outer space”. It is still not the dwelling place of God!

Remember also the dragon and his goons were locked in the abyss, as we previously discussed in our study of the trumpets. Even though Jesus, the One who has the power over life and death, has granted them a limited absence from the abyss, they cannot physically cause us harm. (*During Jesus' ministry the demons could take over a person's body for their own purposes. But after Christ's resurrection that was stopped. No longer could they possess our bodies physically – now they can only entice us with desire.*)

Spence remarks in regard to the “**casting down of Satan to the earth:**” The phrase “to the earth” is meant in a twofold sense:

- a description of the loss of dignity and power for Satan as he was banished from heaven.
- the scene of his future operations, where he may still in some degree sustain his struggle against God.

## A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Fourteen

I look upon the remainder of this chapter as the rejoicing by all the host of heaven over the victory of the lamb – Jesus – and the defeat of Satan himself. But, don't get me wrong. Even though we know how the story ends – Satan will be defeated – that does NOT mean the old dragon has given up the fight!

As we are going to see in the next few chapters, he is still very much at work in the world, attempting to entice the righteous away from God. There is no need to waste time on the unrighteous – he already controls them. Notice particularly verse 17: ***“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”*** Since he cannot be victorious over God, he devotes his full time to the destruction of those who follow God, preying on their weaknesses, using everything in his power to lure them away from the light, to distract their eyes from that majestic throne scene so beautifully described in Revelation 4-5. Fortunately, our God has left us with the reassurance that our enemy will not prevail: ***“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world”.***  
***1st John 4:4.***

### ***A SIDE NOTE regarding Satan's fall from heaven:***

The verses we read in chapter 12 regarding Satan being thrown down to earth, along with two or three in Jude, are primarily responsible for the widely accepted view that Satan was once an archangel abiding in heaven (within the realm of God) but he wanted more power, perhaps even to be equal to God. He may have and probably did use his position to convince other angels to join him in a revolt against God. After all, Jude 6 does record: ***“And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.”*** I do not deny this happened because when the 70 returned and told Jesus ***“even the devils are subject unto us through thy name,”*** He replies in Luke's gospel (10:18) ***“I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.”*** Certainly, those events did happen, but I don't believe Revelation 12 is speaking of that event. I believe the fall of Satan

## **A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION**

**Ron Roberts**

**Lesson Fourteen**

and his angels occurred much closer to the time of creation than to the birth of Christ – perhaps even before man was created because we see “that old serpent” tempt Eve in the garden of Eden!