

The Last Days

An In-Depth Study of Biblical Eschatology

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

“Write ... what will take place later” – Revelation 4-22

Revelation 12 *Heavenly Signs*

The Woman and the Red Dragon (12:1-17)

12:1-2 John saw a “great sign” (a symbol of something else) in heaven: a “woman”. The images of the woman being “clothed with the sun”, the “moon under her feet” and the “crown of twelve stars” on her head are reminiscent of a dream Joseph described for his family a couple of thousand years earlier ^{Genesis 37:9-11}. Joseph’s father, Jacob, interpreted the dream ^{Genesis 37:10}, and he responded to the dream with anger, but Joseph’s brothers responded with jealousy. Jacob (Israel) could tell he was represented by the the sun and his wife Rachel the moon, while the stars were Jacob’s sons (the tribes of Israel). John also described the woman as being pregnant, and crying out from her labor pains as she prepared to give birth ^{Isaiah 26:16-18, Galatians 4:19}. This is the first of seven “signs” in Revelation ^{Revelation 12:1,3, 13:13,14, 15:1, 16:14, 19:20}.

Who or what do the woman and the child represent?

- ✦ It is clear the woman is Israel ^{Genesis 26:4, 37:9-11, Isaiah 66:7} (Israel was described as the wife of God ^{Isaiah 54:5, Ezekiel 16:32}) and the child is Jesus ^{Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 9:6, Micah 5:2, Galatians 3:16}.
- Catholicism teaches they are Mary and Jesus.
- Some Protestants believe they are the church and Jesus (replacement theology).

There are a total of four symbolic women described in Revelation. They are:

- Jezebel, an idiom for paganism ^{Revelation 2:20-23},
- ✦ A woman clothed with the sun, representing Israel ^{Revelation 12:1-2, 4-6, 13-17},
- The scarlet woman (a harlot), depicting the false church ^{Revelation 17:3-6, 15-18}; and
- † The bride/wife of the Lamb, representing the true church ^{2 Corinthians 11:2, Revelation 19:7-9, 21:9}.

12:3 A second “sign”: “an enormous red dragon” who is the devil (*diabolos*: slanderer) or Satan ^{v.9} (*satanas*: adversary). The color red ^{2 Kings 3:21-22, Revelation 6:4} is an indicator of blood and death (an appropriate color for a murderer ^{John 8:44}). Satan is said to have

The Last Days: 14 Revelation 12-13

seven heads ^{Revelation 13:1, 17:3,7,9}, ten horns ^{Daniel 7:7,20,24, Revelation 13:1, 17:3,7,12,16} and seven crowns. These images are symbols for kingdoms, power and kings, respectively. (There will be a discussion of the interpretation of these in a later chapter ^{Revelation 17}.)

12:4 When Satan rejected his very high angelic position and desired to be in an equal position of power and glory as “the Most High” God ^{Isaiah 14:12-15, Ezekiel 28:11-19}, he was thrown out of Heaven by God ^{v.9, Luke 10:18}. This verse indicates that a third of all of the angels (stars ↔ angels ^{Job 38:7, Isaiah 14:12, Revelation 1:20}) joined him in the rebellion and became his demons. In order to gain his goal of power and position, Satan’s primary mission has always been to thwart the plan of God. His first action was to corrupt man in the Garden of Eden ^{Genesis 3:1-7, 14-15}. Later, Satan planned to kill Israel’s child (Jesus) immediately after His birth ^{Matthew 2:13-21}, but in every case, God thwarted his plans.

12:5 The woman (Israel) gave birth to her son (Jesus) ^{Isaiah 7:13-14, Matthew 1:1} who was destined to use an iron scepter ^{Psalms 2:6-9, Revelation 2:27, 19:15} to rule (*poimainō*: shepherd) all the nations. Jesus was “caught up” (snatched) ^{2 Corinthians 12:2-4, 1 Thessalonians 4:17} (*harpazō*: seize with force) to join His Father on the throne (His Ascension ^{Acts 1:1-9}).

12:6 The Jews redeemed during Daniel’s 70th Week were protected by God in the desert mountains ^{Matthew 24:16} (maybe in an untouched area east of Palestine ^{Daniel 11:41}) for 1260 days (3½ years). God’s sovereign protection follows the “abomination that causes desolation” ^{Daniel 9:27, 11:31, 12:11, Matthew 24:15} and during the time the Gentiles are destroying Jerusalem ^{Revelation 11:2} during the Great Tribulation ^{Matthew 24:21-22}.

12:7-9 There was a final war in Heaven between the archangel (*archangelos*: highest ranking angel) Michael ^{Daniel 10:13,21, 12:1, Jude 9} & his angels and Satan & his angels. Some speculate these verses describe Satan’s initial fall from Heaven ^{Ezekiel 28:16-17}, but it seems clear the battle here was Satan’s final effort to make his mark in heaven. The red dragon ^{v.3} & demons were defeated and “lost their place in heaven”, meaning Satan & followers would no longer be granted access to God in Heaven ^{Job 1:6-12, 2:1-7}. The demon horde and their leader were thrown to the earth ^{v.4} (*ge*: domain of man). As the father of lies ^{John 8:44}, Satan’s best weapon is deception ^{Genesis 3:1-7, Revelation 20:7-10}. Satan had previously been a very high-ranking angel: a “guardian cherub” (*kerûb*) ^{Ezekiel 28:16}.

The Last Days: 14 Revelation 12-13

12:10 A "loud voice in heaven" began a prophetic proclamation of the end time events: the arrival of "the salvation (*sōtēria*: deliverance) ^{Revelation 7:10} and the power (*dunamis*: inherent power) ^{Revelation 11:17} and the kingdom (*basileia*: royal dominion) ^{Revelation 11:15} of our God, and the authority of his Christ". This had all been accomplished, because Satan the "accuser" ^{Job 1:9-11, 2:4-5, Zechariah 3:1, Luke 22:31} was defeated by Jesus on the cross ^{John 16:11, 1 Corinthians 15:54-57, Hebrews 2:14} and his punishment is coming ^{Revelation 20:10}.

12:11 The genuine believers overcame Satan ^{1 John 2:12-14, Revelation 15:2} by the "blood of the Lamb" ^{Hebrews 9:14, 1 John 5:3-5, Revelation 7:13-14, 12:11a}, and their testimony ^{Revelation 6:9} (*marturia*: bearing witness) and their obedience unto death ^{Romans 8:33-39, Revelation 12:11b}. The dedication of the overcomers to Jesus was revealed in a lack of love (*agapaō*: a direction of will to find one's joy) for their own earthly lives ^{Luke 14:26, Acts 20:24, 21:13} (*psuchē*: soul), because they belonged to Jesus ^{Romans 14:8, Philippians 1:20}.

12:12 Resulting from Jesus defeating Satan, Heaven rejoiced ^{Psalms 96:11a, Isaiah 44:23a, 49:13} (*euphrainō*: well mind), but this produced woe on the earth ^{Revelation 8:13}, because the devil's time is short ^{Revelation 20:10} which enraged him ^{1 Peter 5:8} (*thumos*: anger outburst).

12:13 After the birth of Jesus ^{v.5}, Satan tormented both Israel and the church, but with the church gone, he concentrated on persecuting Jews ^{Isaiah 61:1-3, Jeremiah 30:7, Ezekiel 21}.

12:14 God used His mighty power ^{Exodus 19:4} (the wings of a great eagle ^{Isaiah 40:29-31}) to help the Jews being redeemed to "fly" to a place He prepared for their protection/provision from Satan ^{v.6} during the Great Tribulation (3½ years ^{Revelation 13:5}).

12:15-16 Since Eden, Satan constantly works to destroy God's people ^{2 Corinthians 11:3}. Water was a symbol of the onslaught Satan brought on the Jews during the Tribulation; however, God protected Israel by swallowing up Satan's intended harm ^{Numbers 16:32}.

12:17 The devil was enraged over God's protection of the woman (Israel), so he began to attack the her offspring (*sperma*: seed for sowing): the people who accepted Jesus as Lord & Savior ^{Revelation 13:7} (true believers who obey and testify about Jesus) during the Tribulation, resulting from the witness of the 144,000 Jewish servants ^{Revelation 7:1-8}.

Revelation 13 *Completion of the Satanic Trinity*

The Antichrist: *The Seed of Satan* (13:1-10)

13:1 John saw the “dragon” (Satan^{Revelation 12:9}) standing on the shore, when “a beast coming out of the sea”^{Daniel 7:2-3}. The sea could represent the nations/peoples of the world^{Revelation 17:15} or the abyss^{Revelation 11:7, 17:8}, because both are applicable to him. This picture of the beast (the Antichrist^{1 John 2:18}) was similar to Satan’s^{Revelation 12:3} (seven heads, ten horns and ten crowns – see other discussions^{Revelation 12, 17}), with a slight difference in the number of crowns (*diadēma*: crown of a king), ten vs seven (indicating the crowns of this beast were on his horns). John saw each of the beast’s heads had a blasphemous (*blasphēmia*: abuse against someone) name^{Revelation 17:3}; a first indication of the predominant character trait of the Antichrist^{Daniel 11:36-39}.

The Greek word for kingly crown appears only three times in Scripture: for the worldly kings, Satan^{Revelation 12:3} and the beast^{v.1}, and for the eternal heavenly king, Jesus^{Revelation 19:12}.

13:2 This beast had features of three other beasts: leopard, bear, lion – similar to a vision in Daniel^{Daniel 7:2-6}; where the lion signified Babylon, the bear – Medo-Persia and the leopard – Greece. Satan gave his own power, throne and authority to the beast. Note the reverse order of the two lists of the three beasts/kingdoms^{v.2, Daniel 7:2-6}. Daniel named the three kingdoms chronologically, because they were being named into the future; whereas, John named them in the reverse order, because his perspective was back in time.

13:3-4 The beast “seemed” to have a “fatal wound” (on one of his heads) that “healed” (another attempt to copy God, by convincing the world the Antichrist was the dead, then resurrected Messiah^{Revelation 17:8}, but probably through deception^{Revelation 13:14}). The world (the “inhabitants of the earth”^{v.8}) interpreted this as a miracle (one of the many signs/wonders^{v.13, 2 Thessalonians 2:9}) and chose to follow the beast. In fact, these humans chose to worship both Satan and the beast, thinking they were invincible.

13:5-6 The beast not only had blasphemous names^{v.1}, but also had been “given” a mouth to boast^{Daniel 7:8,11, 2 Thessalonians 2:4} and “exercise authority” for 42 months (last half of the 70th Week of Daniel – the “Great Tribulation”)^{Daniel 7:25, Revelation 11:2, 12:6,13-14}. During these 3½ years, the beast “opened his mouth to” blaspheme God^{Malachi 3:13-15}, His (powerful^{Jeremiah 10:6, John 17:11}) name^{Leviticus 20:3}, His “dwelling place”^{Psalms 75:4-5} and His saints in heaven.

The Last Days: 14 Revelation 12-13

13:7 He was “given power” ^{John 19:11} to kill Tribulation saints ^{Daniel 7:21, 8:24, Revelation 11:7} and to have control over the world ^{Daniel 7:25, 8:25, Matthew 24:22, Revelation 6:9-11, 11:7, 12:17}.

13:8 The “inhabitants of the earth” (all without names in the Book of Life ^{Revelation 20:15}) chose to worship the beast (a stark reminder there are only two choices: people are either for Jesus or against Him ^{Luke 11:23}, because each person either chooses to follow Jesus ^{Mark 8:34} or Satan ^{John 8:44}). The sacrificial death of Jesus (the Lamb ^{John 1:29}) was God’s plan from the beginning of time ^{Isaiah 53:10-12, John 12:27, Acts 2:22-23, 3:18}.

13:9-10 “He who has an ear, let him hear.” (The other 7 times in Revelation, this phrase ends with “...what the Spirit says to the churches.” ^{Revelation 2:7,11,17,29, 3:6,13,22}. Why? Because the church has been in heaven since before the Tribulation. ^{Revelation 4:1}) This verse is a call for Tribulation saints to use “patient endurance” ^{Revelation 14:12} in order to accept persecution from the Antichrist without resistance ^{Matthew 26:50-54}, because God has ordained it ^{1 Peter 2:19-24}.

Who or what is the “Antichrist” (meaning both “against” and “in place of” Christ)?

- A belief system rooted in the spirit of Satan & the world. ^{1 John 4:2-3}
- An actual person who embraces the belief system (above):
 - Any person who allows the spirit to control him ^{1 John 2:18b, 22, 2 John 1:7, 2 John 1:7} or
 - The beast in the Tribulation who completely embodied the spirit of Satan. ^{1 John 2:18a}In addition to ‘beast’ and ‘Antichrist’, he has many names through Scripture, including: ‘little horn’ ^{Daniel 7:7-8}, ‘stern-faced king’ ^{Daniel 8:23-25}, ‘seed of the serpent’ ^{Genesis 3:15}, ‘worthless shepherd’ ^{Zechariah 11:16-17}, ‘man of lawlessness’ ^{2 Thessalonians 2:1-10}, ‘the ruler who will come’ ^{Daniel 9:24-27}, etc (more than 30 names in the OT and over 10 in the NT).

The False Prophet: *Satan’s Religious Leader* (13:11-18)

13:11 John saw a “beast...out of the earth” (symbolic of world systems ^{Revelation 19:19}) (also called “false prophet” ^{Revelation 16:13, 19:20, 20:10}). He had two horns (less authority than the Antichrist) like a lamb, but spoke alluring deception like Satan ^{Genesis 3:1-4}. (Jesus warned of ravenous wolves ^{Ezekiel 22:27, Acts 20:29} in sheep’s clothing ^{Matthew 7:15}.)

He completed the unholy trinity: another attempt by Satan to copy God’s perfect plans.

- † Father ⇔ Son ⇔ Holy Spirit ^{Matthew 28:19}
- Satan ⇔ Antichrist ⇔ False Prophet ^{Revelation 16:13, 20:10}

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The Last Days: 14 Revelation 12-13

13:12-14 The second beast (religious leader) wielded the power of and for the first beast (political leader). He “made” the world inhabitants (non-believers) worship the Antichrist, whose fatal wound was probably a deception ^{v.3}, and one of the “great signs” the false prophet performed (fire from sky, but power from God ^{1 Kings 18:22-39}). The signs were deceptions to convince the people to follow the Antichrist ^{Revelation 19:20} (the fulfillment of Jesus’ and Paul’s prophetic warnings ^{Matthew 24:24, 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10}). He “ordered them” to set up an image (*eikōn*: a bodily representation) to honor the Antichrist (the “abomination that causes desolation” ^{Daniel 9:27,11:31,12:11, Matthew 24:15}). This is the only Biblical reference to the first beast being wounded by a sword ^{v.14}. The Antichrist will kill by the sword ^{v.10} and will be “killed” by the sword ^{v.14}. ^{Matthew 26:52}

13:15 The false prophet was “given power” to provide the image (of the Antichrist?) with breath (*pneuma*: the wind) (so that it could speak ^{Psalms 135:15-18, Habakkuk 2:18-19} – an appearance of life) and the ability to kill all who refused to worship it ^{Daniel 3:3-6}.

13:16-17 The false prophet “forced everyone” to get a mark (*charagma*: impression, symbol) on their right hand or forehead (another case of copying God – God’s marks: seal of circumcision ^{Genesis 17:11, Romans 4:11}, seal of the Holy Spirit ^{Ephesians 1:13-14}, marks of Jesus ^{Galatians 6:17}, a seal on the forehead of Tribulation “servants” ^{Revelation 7:3}). The False Prophet used coercion, but the people made up their own minds ^{Romans 1:18-20}. Without the mark of the beast, a person was not able to buy or sell anything (a pitiful copy of Jesus’ free offer to all of living water ^{John 4:4-15} and eternal bread ^{John 6:32-51}). The “mark” people received for worshipping the Antichrist was not a unique identifier of that person, but the “name of the beast or the number of his name” showing their allegiance to him. Without the mark of the beast, a person could not purchase or sell goods on the earth; however, with the mark, that person will spend eternity in hell ^{Revelation 14:9-11}.

13:18 This issue “calls for wisdom” (*sophia*: wisdom related to goodness). The number of the beast is the 3-fold repetition of man’s number, 6, indicating incompleteness. There is a great deal of controversy over the meaning of the beast’s name and number. In many languages, including Hebrew, Greek and Latin, letters have number equivalents, and most of the speculation on the meaning of “666” involves the use of these number equivalents.