

SATAN SHOWS HIS HATRED FOR ISRAEL

Summary and Historical Background

After the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, two insets are given to John. The first inset reveals Satan's hostility for Christ and for Israel. Satan is primarily against Christ because he knows that God has promised to make Him King in Zion (Jerusalem) and give Him the nations to rule with a rod of iron (Ps 2:6-9). If this happens, he will be defeated and no longer be the king of the earth. Since Satan could not corrupt Christ and he could not keep Christ in the grave, he must continue to corrupt Israel or destroy her. He knows that God has promised to enthrone His Son on the holy hill of Zion (Jerusalem) and bless all nations with peace through Zion (Ps 2:6; Isa 2:1-4). So he must keep the fires of rebellion burning in Israel against God, so she cannot be used by Christ to rule the earth. If she repents of her sins, she must be destroyed. Satan knows that he must make it impossible for God to keep His promise to make Jerusalem the city for establishing His Kingdom on earth. He knows that this is a tenuous plan, because he tried to destroy Israel several times in the past to keep Christ from being born, but failed; and he greatly corrupted Israel in the past, but even so, God found a holy remnant in Israel that He could use to bring His Son into the world. But this is the best plan that he has for defeating God and keeping the nations under his control. With this information regarding Satan's enmity for Christ and Israel, it will be helpful in comprehending the events of Revelation 12.

I. Satan's Afflictions Against Israel's People – 12:1-6

A. The Woman – 12:1-2

12:1-2 – A great sign appears in heaven. God gives two other signs in Revelation 12:3; 15:1. God gives a sign to illustrate a literal truth that He wants to teach. A great sign conveys a very important truth. His first sign in Revelation is a woman that is clothed with the sun, under her feet is the moon, on her head is a crown of twelve stars and she is about to give birth to a child. Many believe this sign refers to Mary, the mother of Jesus. At first glance this seems to be true, but the rest of the story regarding this woman makes this interpretation indefensible. When the child is caught up to God, the woman flees to the wilderness (2:5-6). Then Satan makes war with the rest of this woman's children (12:17). Neither of these events applies to Mary. Some commentators believe the woman represents the Jewish community living at the time of Jesus' birth, but the Jewish community never fled to the wilderness for 1260 days after Jesus went to Heaven. Others believe the woman is a symbol of the Church, but the Church is a virgin, not a woman that is about to bear a literal child. Furthermore, the Church did not bring Jesus into the world. The best identification of the woman is the nation of Israel going back to the time of Jacob and his twelve sons. Support for this view is found in Joseph's dream (Gen 37:9-10). The symbols of sun, moon and stars relate to Israel as the woman: the sun is Jacob, a patriarch of Israel; the moon is Jacob's wife (or wives); and the 12 stars are the 12 sons of Jacob, which became the 12 tribes of Israel. Nothing else comes close to this symbolism of the woman in the Old Testament. The woman is a sign of Israel.

Consider four more arguments, which further support the identity of this woman with Israel:

1. The context is speaking of Israel's persecution during the Tribulation (cf. 11:1-2; 12:13-17).
2. Israel is identified at times in the Old Testament as a woman (cf. Isa. 54:5-6; 66:7-8; Jer. 4:31; Micah 4:9-10; 5:3).
3. The length of her persecution (1260 days) parallels other prophecies concerning Israel and the Great Tribulation (12:6, 14; Dan. 9:27).
4. Scripture indicates that Christ is born of Israel (Rom. 9:4-5).

Israel is portrayed as a woman in travail, giving birth to her child. Israel has suffered much at the hands

of Gentiles, because she refused to intermarry with them. She remained a distinct people so God could bring His Son into the world through her according to His promises to Abraham and David (Gen 12:1-3; 15:5-6; 2 Sam 7:16; Mt 1:1). She believed His Son would be born of Judah, be their Messiah, and make of them a great nation.

B. The Dragon – 12:3-4

12:3 – John saw another sign in Heaven: it was a great red dragon. The dragon can be none other than Satan himself. The context identifies him as such (Rev. 12:9; 20:2). He was great because he was given the greatest power of all the angels. His red color probably symbolizes the murders he has committed to remain in power on earth. The dragon is an Old Testament symbol of cruelty (Ezk. 29:3-4; Jer. 51:34). The seven heads and ten horns on the dragon represent the governments that Satan has used and will use to attack Israel. The seven heads are Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome and the revived Roman Empire. The ten horns are ten countries from the old Roman Empire that unite under Antichrist. The crowns on the seven heads show the six empires that Satan has used and one that he will use in his attempt to corrupt and crush Israel. They are more germane to this chapter than the horns. (In the next chapter the crowns are on the horns.) History makes it known that these heads are consecutive over thousands of years and do not appear simultaneously.

12:4 – The ability of Satan to sweep a third of the stars out of Heaven and bring them to the earth shows the extent of his influence among the angels. The stars represent angels rather than literal stars (cf. 9:1; Job 38:7). This passage is giving a historical account of Satan's activities in Heaven. Here the angels are evil angels who chose to follow Satan as he attempted to exalt himself above God (Isa. 14:12-14). Many of the angels that followed Satan were cast into the abyss and are confined there awaiting their Day of Judgment (Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4). However, other fallen angels are still free to serve Satan and are helping him rule his wicked kingdom (Mt. 12:24-27; Eph. 2:2-3; 6:11-12). They, too, will be judged and cast into the Lake of Fire with Satan (Mt. 25:41).

John's attention now is focused on the dragon as he stands before the woman who is about to give birth to her child. Mary is the person that God chose among all the women of Israel to bring His Son into the world, but she is not the sign of the woman in 12:1. The woman in 12:1 is all Israel including Mary. God told Satan in the Garden of Eden that He was going to send a Person born of a woman to destroy him (Gen 3:15). As a result Satan has studied God's promises to determine how he could thwart God's plan by killing anyone who could fulfill God's promise. When God called Abraham and promised him a nation through which He would send His Son and bless the world, Satan began to plan his strategy to stop God's plan and make it impossible for Him to keep His promise to Abraham. Consider some of the ways that Satan has worked to foil God's plan in Israel's history:

1. The famine in the land during Abraham's journeying (Gen 12:1-3, 10-12).
2. Pharaoh's order to kill all the male babies born of Israelite women (Ex 1:8-22).
3. Israel's unbelief and rebellion against God in the wilderness (Num 13:26-14:4).
4. The reduction of the Messianic line to one descendant: Joash (2 Chr 22:10-23:15).
5. The entire Jewish population was threatened with extinction in the days of Esther (Esth 3:13).

There are three important truths to remember concerning the trials that Israel has suffered:

1. God allowed and then overruled the evil of Satan's attempts to destroy Israel (cf. Isa. 10:5ff).
2. God allowed some of these trials to serve either as a judgment upon Israel's sin or as a testing of Israel's faith (Gen. 50:20; 2 Chron. 36:15ff).
3. God would not allow His purposes to be defeated; His plan of salvation would be accomplished.

Since all of Satan's attempts to exterminate the Messianic line and to destroy the nation of Israel ended in failure, he then sought to destroy the actual Redeemer, Jesus Christ. He stirred up jealousy in Herod's heart to cause him sign a decree to kill the King of the Jews (Mt. 2:1-3, 16-18). But God overruled and

protected His Son, warning the wise men and Joseph through dreams (Mt. 2:12-15).

C. The Man Child – 12:5

12:5 – The woman gave birth to a son, which was Jesus Christ. It cannot refer to the Church as some commentators would say, because this is a masculine word (a male child), not a feminine word that would be needed for the Church. Furthermore, the description of this child's rule is indicative of Christ: He would rule the nations with a rod of iron (Ps. 2:9; Rev. 19:15).

The life of Christ is not mentioned in this verse, not even His death. It simply gives a clear reference to His resurrection and ascension to the throne of God. However, Satan tried to tempt Christ to sin and cause His death several times, but he was unsuccessful until he helped the Jewish leaders to ask Pilate to have Him crucified. Israel's decision to crucify her Messiah has caused her much suffering and death ever since that day, and now she must endure the Tribulation before she will repent and receive her Messiah. Then she will be blessed in His Kingdom (Mic. 5:2; Rom. 11:1-2). The empty tomb, however, is proof that Christ was not conquered by Satan: He is alive and is victorious over Satan. At present, Christ is seated at the Father's right hand in Heaven (Eph. 1:20-22; Heb. 10:12). He is waiting for His Father's permission to return to the earth to be its King for a thousand years (Dan 7:13-14).

D. The Wilderness – 12:6

12:6 – The woman (Israelite believers) will flee into the wilderness at the middle of the Tribulation. There is a prophetic gap of more than 2000 years between verses 5 and 6, and no one knows how much longer it will be. At the middle of the Tribulation, Antichrist will demand the worship of all nations, including Israel, at his image in the Temple courtyard. Jesus told them to flee when they see the abomination (the image of Antichrist) in the Temple (Mt 24:15-22; cf Dan. 9:27; 11:36-38). Those who remain in Jerusalem will be killed or severely persecuted by Antichrist. God will prepare a place for those that flee into the wilderness. There is evidence that the place will be at Petra, the ancient city of Bozrah (Mic 2:12). God will care for those Israelites for 1260 days until the end of the Tribulation (cf Isa 63:1-6).

II. Satan's Attack Against Israel's Messiah – 12:7-9

A. Satan Starts the War – 12:7

12:7 – Satan makes war in Heaven with his angels. This event occurs shortly before the Israelite believers flee to the wilderness. Satan has heard the cries of the kings, generals, rich and powerful men and their slaves call for the mountains and rocks to fall on them to hide them from the face of God sitting on His throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. He heard them ask, "Who can stand against them?" (6:15-17). Satan is desperate to stop Christ from taking away his kingdom that he has ruled since he took control of it from Adam, so he intends to answer that question by forming his demon angels into an army. He and his army will attack God, the Lamb and the hosts of Heaven.

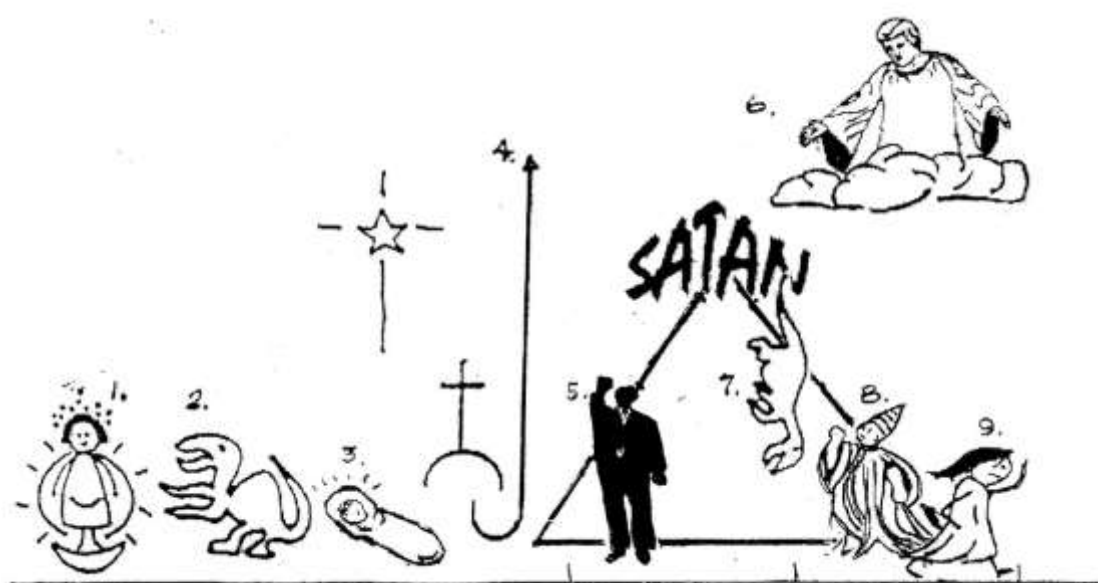
It is evident that Satan's purpose for the war is to attack Christ and kill Him. Satan is desperate to stop Christ from taking away the kingdom that he has ruled since Adam. Satan tried to kill Christ many times on earth and finally succeeded in having Him crucified. If Satan can kill Christ in Heaven, he will keep his kingdom and remain king of the earth. If Christ remains alive, Satan is finished: God said that the One that He is sending will crush Satan's head (Gen 3:15). Satan is sure that he and his angels can successfully stand against God and the Lamb.

This war begins in Heaven shortly before the Israelite believers flee to the wilderness (12:6). Daniel makes reference to this stand of Michael in Heaven and says that a time of trouble will follow this war that has not been experienced by any nation to that time (Dan 12:1). This trouble is a clear reference to

the last half of the Tribulation, so this war is near the middle of the Tribulation. Michael, the archangel, was commissioned by God to be guardian over the nation of Israel. He will be in charge of God's army in Heaven.

B. Satan Loses the War 12:8-9

12:8-9 – Michael and his army of angels overcome Satan and his demonic angels. After Satan's defeat, he and his angels are expelled from Heaven and cast down to earth. He will no longer be able to appear before the throne of God as he had done before (Job 1:6-9; 2:1-6; Zech. 3:1ff). He is referred to as the serpent of old, a reference to his initial act of deception of Eve in Garden of Eden. He is called the Devil, which means to slander or defame. He is also called Satan, which refers to him as an adversary. He deceives the whole world: he is the master liar (cf. Rev. 20:8; 2 Cor. 11:3). His false prophets even try to deceive the very elect (Mt. 24:24).



3½ years

3½ years

1. The woman is Israel (12:1-2; cf Gen 37:9-10 re Joseph's dream about his father, mother and brothers).
2. The dragon is Satan (12:9). He tries to destroy the woman's child as soon as He is born (Mt 2:13ff).
3. The child is Jesus (12:5). He will rule the nations with a rod of iron (Ps 2:8-9; Rev 2:26-27; 19:15).
4. The upward arrow signifies the ascension of Jesus Christ after His death and resurrection (12:5). He is caught up to God where He now sits at His Father's right hand until He is given permission to rule the world on His behalf (Ps 110).
5. The king is Antichrist (13:4-5). He will assist Satan in persecuting the saints (13:7; cf Dan 7:25).
6. The angel is Michael who leads his angels in defeating Satan and his angels in Heaven (12:7-9).
7. The falling dragon is Satan being cast out of heaven to earth in the middle of the Tribulation (12:7-13; cf Dan 12:1).
8. The religious leader is the False Prophet. He assists Antichrist in persecuting believers (13:11-17).
9. The woman signifies Israelite believers fleeing from Antichrist to the wilderness for God's protection for 3½ years (12:6,14). They will flee in the middle of the Tribulation when they see his idol (the abomination of desolation) in the Holy Place (12:6, 13-17; cf Dan 9:27; Mt 24:15).

III. Satan's Action Against Israel's Believers – 12:10-17

A. Testimony from Heaven – 12:10

12:10 – A loud voice is heard in Heaven, which must be that of the martyrs (cf 12:11), especially those that are killed during the first half of the Tribulation (6:9-11). Also, they refer to the believers accused by Satan as “our brethren,” so the loud voice cannot be from angels. The martyrs testify that salvation had come to them by the power of God. Salvation in this sense is deliverance from the accusations of Satan. It was by God's power that Michael and his angels overcame Satan and his angels. Since the accuser of the brethren has been cast out of Heaven, it was a sure sign that the Kingdom of God had come and the authority of Christ would replace Satan's (cf. Ps. 2:7-9). His accusations against the brethren may have been like those that he brought before God against Job (Job 2:1ff). Satan is before God day and night accusing the brethren on earth, but when he is cast out of Heaven, he no longer has access to God.

B. Triumph over Satan – 12:11

12:11 – Not only was Satan defeated by Michael and his angels, but he had been overcome by the martyrs that testified with a loud voice in the previous verse. They defeated Satan by three means. **First**, they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb. Christ's death on the cross delivered them from the power of Satan (Heb 2:14-15), so they would be able to defeat him. **Second**, they did it by the word of their testimony. These martyrs were faithful witnesses of Christ's death and resurrection, which is the power of the Gospel. Their witness delivered others from Satan's hold on their lives. **Third**, they were victorious because they refused to deny their faith in Christ, even in the face of death (cf. Rev. 2:10). Satan cannot win when believers practice these three principles.

C. Torment on Earth – 12:12-17

1. Satan's Wrath – 12:12

12:12 – Those dwelling in Heaven were told to rejoice. The Tribulation martyrs saw evidence that God was answering their prayers. No longer would Satan be able to appear before God and accuse the righteous. However, the earth and the sea still must endure the wrath of Satan. He knows that his time is short. He must destroy Jerusalem before the end of the Tribulation (3½ years) so Christ cannot set up His Kingdom from that city as God promised Him. He will do whatever he can to keep Christ from ruling the earth. The earth will suffer the wrath of Satan and it will suffer the wrath of God during the last half of the Tribulation. This is why the final years of the Tribulation will be the worst time that the people on earth will ever experience. Although Satan is aware of Scripture, he interprets it from a depraved mind. Therefore, his application of Scripture is seriously limited. As the deceiver of the world, he will deceive himself and his followers to think that he can defeat the plan of God and permanently establish his own kingdom on the earth (Isa. 14:12-14).

2. Satan's Persecution – 12:13

12:13 – After Satan is defeated in Heaven and cast down to earth, he will vehemently attack Israel (the woman) and seek to totally destroy her so he can invalidate God's promise to make Israel the head of His Kingdom on earth. The work of Haman and Hitler are two horrendous examples of previous satanic attempts to destroy Israel. Satan's attempt to annihilate Israel during the Tribulation will be much worse. By doing this to Israel, he apparently expects God to abandon His plan to set up His Kingdom on earth and let him continue his rule of the earth.

3. God's Protection – 12:14

12:14 – God is wiser and more powerful than Satan and will not allow him to destroy Israel. He will guide and provide for those that heed the warning of Jesus Christ (Mt 24:15ff) to flee from Jerusalem to the wilderness when they see the abomination of desolation (image of Antichrist) in the holy place. He will provide two wings of a great eagle for the woman to bring her to a place of safety from Antichrist. The two wings of an eagle is a figure of speech that God used to describe His care of Israel to protect and provide for those people when He took them out of Egypt (Ex. 19:4; Deut. 32:11-12).

The believers among the Israelites realize that their only hope of survival under Antichrist's rule is to flee to a special place that God will provide for them in the wilderness. This place could be Petra, also known as Bozrah in Jordan, which means "sheep pen." It is called Bozrah because it is like a sheep pen surrounded by rocks, easily protected, and was once a city with buildings carved out of the rocks. Micah 2:12 refers to Israel being gathered in Bozrah before Christ establishes His Kingdom:

"I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of you; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men."

Christ will encounter a bloody warfare at Bozrah when He returns to earth (Isa 63:1-6), which may be against the armies of Antichrist that have finally arrived to destroy Israel (cf Isa 33:16-17; 34:1-8). At any rate God will prepare a place for these believers to keep Antichrist from annihilating Israel (Mt. 24:15-22). God will supernaturally feed Israel while she is in the wilderness. In the past God fed Israel in the wilderness with manna for 40 years so He can do it again (Ex. 16:35).

God will supply Israel's needs "for a time, and times, and half a time," which is the last 3½ years of the Tribulation (cf. Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 11:2; 12:6; 13:5). Even though these Israelites will be protected in the wilderness, many will not flee to the wilderness. At least 2/3 of Israel's population will be killed during the Tribulation (Zech. 13:8-9).

4. Satan's Flood – 12:15

12:15 – When the believing Israelites flee from Jerusalem to a special place prepared by God, Satan will pour out water from his mouth, like a flood, in an attempt to sweep them away. The flood of water from his mouth is clearly a figure of speech. The water from his mouth must refer to a flood of words that he gives to Antichrist's army to go after the Israelites and destroy them (Isa. 59:19). Pharaoh discovered that it was foolish to fight against God's people when he gave similar commands to his army to pursue the Israelites and bring them back to Egypt. His army was drowned in the Red Sea (Ex. 14).

5. Earth's Provision – 12:16

12:16 – God used the Red Sea to save Israel from Pharaoh and here He will use the earth to save the woman (the believing Israelites). The earth opening its mouth is a figure of speech for an earthquake. Antichrist's army will be swallowed up by an earthquake (cf. Num. 16:32-35). Satan's attack on these Israelites will turn against him and cause him severe loss and humiliation.

6. Satan's War – 12:17

12:17 – Satan will be furious with the woman (Israel). He was unable to destroy her children in the wilderness, so now he turns his wrath against the rest of her children. This will include the 144,000 Israelites, the two witnesses and other Israelite believers that did not flee to the wilderness. They will boldly declare the truth that Jesus Christ gave to them. Two-thirds of all Israelites in the land of Israel will die, but God will bring one-third through the fire of persecution (Zech. 13:8-9). The armies of the nations will attack the city of Jerusalem in the final days of the Great Tribulation and half of the city will be taken.

Houses will be ransacked and the women will be raped (Zech 14:1-2). Then Jesus Christ will come to the Mount of Olives to save the city from further destruction (Zech. 14:3-4; Rev 19:11-15). This completes the first inset between the seventh trumpet and judgments of the bowls of wrath.

Recap of Revelation 12

Israel appears as a woman in chapter 12 and Satan appears as the great red dragon. The woman is due to bring Christ into the world as a baby and Satan is poised to devour Him as soon as He is born. He fails in this attempt, but his plan does not change. During the life of Jesus Christ, Satan repeatedly attempts to corrupt or kill Him. He is unsuccessful in both attempts until he prods the Jews to ask for His crucifixion on the cross. His success is short-lived; Christ is resurrected and caught up to God in Heaven. Now Satan changes his attack to focus on Israel. He must keep Israel in rebellion against God; he has been successful in this regard until the present hour. He will tempt Israel's leaders to make a covenant with Antichrist for peace and safety. This will put Israel in full rebellion against God (2 Th 2:3). But two things go wrong with Satan's plan within the first 3½ years of the Tribulation: (1) at least 144,000 Israelites trust in Christ and later are sealed at mid-Tribulation, and (2) Antichrist is killed in a battle. So he leads a host of his angels to attack and attempt to kill Christ in Heaven. Michael and his angels overcome his attack and cast him and his army out of Heaven to earth. From Daniel's account, this happens at the middle of the Tribulation (Dan 12:1). Satan now knows that he has but a short time to work (3½ years) with only one option: he must corrupt or destroy every Israelite. With God's permission, he raises Antichrist from the dead and gives him full authority to deal with Israel (13:2-7a). Antichrist demands that Israel and all nations worship his image in the Temple court or be killed. Jewish believers flee to the wilderness where God feeds and protects them for 1260 days (until the end of the Tribulation). Satan is enraged with these Israelites and he attacks the rest of her children who keep God's commandments and boldly witness the truth that He gave them. God seals 144,000 of these Israelites at the middle of the Tribulation. Some believe that Antichrist kills these bold witnesses (12:11), but others believe that God's seal protects them and they continue witnessing for Christ until He returns from Heaven to meet them on Mt Zion (14:1). God also sends two witnesses that defy Antichrist's command to worship his image in the Temple court and they will continue to worship God in His Temple sanctuary close to the end of the Tribulation when they are killed and left on the street in Jerusalem for 3½ days. Then God raises them from the dead and calls them up to Heaven in the sight of all people. Antichrist and his party of evil unbelievers are robbed of their sensuous victory celebration.

