



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Revelation

Chapter 12

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Introduction

- This point in the prophecy is something like a new beginning
- John, after seeing Mary, the mother of God, as the Ark of the New Covenant (Revelation 11:19-12:1) goes back to the beginning, to Mary laboring down through salvation history to give birth to the Messiah, to the birth of Jesus (and the birth of the Church) and Satan's unsuccessful attempts to destroy Jesus and the Woman (and her precious "seed" = the Church) which was promised from the fall of our first parents, Adam and Eve



Introduction

- This vision "the woman clothed with the sun and her three enemies," came as an addition to the seven trumpets, and an introduction to the seven bowls
- If the seven trumpets reveal the people's indifference to the voice of God, and the seven bowls reveal the plagues by which He disciplines; between these two, He reveals this vision to show:
 - 1- The condition of the joyful bright Church and her struggle against Satan, since man was found out of Paradise, especially at the last period when the Antichrist comes, and when Satan will aim his last arrow, before he is thrown in the lake that burns with fire



Introduction

2- This war in reality, is between "God and Satan," that is why the enemy uses all tricks to mislead; and thus appears in an impure trinity:

First: The dragon tries to look like the Father

Second: The first beast (Antichrist) tries to look like the Son

Third: The second beast (false prophet) tries to look like the Holy Spirit



Introduction

- 3- The joyful side for the believers is that God is coming as a Bridegroom to the Church, and as the Judge to Satan, and to those who enslaved themselves to him
- This second part of the book will end with the victorious ascent of Christ into heaven and the victory of the Church over Satan and his "seed."

Chapter Outline

- The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon (1-6)
- Satan Thrown Out of Heaven (7-12)
- The Failed Attempt To Persecute The Woman (13-17)

The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon 12:1-6



- In verse 1 John gets our attention immediately by announcing that this sign of "the Woman" is a GREAT sign!
- A "great sign" will only appear again in chapter 15 when the 7 angels bring the 7 plagues
- There is a connection here to Isaiah 7:14, *"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."*

The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon 12:1-6



- The early Fathers confirm that this woman who gave birth to the Lord Jesus is the Church
- In the Old Covenant "a woman" is a familiar Biblical image for the Church, the people of God and the Bride of Yahweh, Isaiah 26:17-18, 40:1-2, 50:1, 66:7-11; Jeremiah 3; Lamentations 1; Ezekiel 16; Hosea 1; Micah 4

The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon 12:1-6



- Bishop Victorianus said, “It is the Church of the patriarchs, the prophets, the saints, and the apostles who were characterized by their sighing and pains, longing to see the Lord Jesus, who is the Fruit of her people in flesh, promised to them long time ago. He took His body from the same people. Her clothing with the sun indicates the hope of resurrection and the glory of the promise. The moon (under her feet) refers to the falling of the bodies of the saints under the forced endless death... And they are shining as the moon in darkness... The garland of twelve stars is the group of the patriarchs from whom the Lord Jesus took the body.”

The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon 12:1-6



- This is the Church that the Lord has described saying, *"Who is she who looks forth as the morning, Fair as the moon, Clear as the sun, Awesome as an army with banners?"* (Song of Solomon 6:10)
- It is the picture of the bride, the Church clothed with Christ, *"the Sun of righteousness"*
- The beams of the divine glory clothe her; she has caught—like Moses—the radiance of her Lord, whose face was as the sun (Revelation 1:16)

The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon 12:1-6



- *the moon under her feet*; She rises superior to all change, and lays all lesser lights of knowledge under tribute
- The moon represent the worldly element, in opposition to the kingdom of God—heaven, the sun
- The moon cannot disperse the darkness and change it into-day: thus it represents the world religion (heathenism)
- The Church has the moon, therefore, under her feet; but the stars, as heavenly lights, on her head

The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon 12:1-6



- She is crowned with a crown of twelve stars: the illustrious of all the members of the Church (twelve being the representative number in Old Testament as well as New Testament times) form her crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ
- When we say "Church," we cannot separate her from the virgin Mary, to whom we are bound in the person of Jesus Christ, as mother of all the living
- Therefore, the woman is also, as the early Fathers say, St. Mary, for the Lord Jesus, the sun of righteousness dwelled in her, and she got a heavenly glory, she who gave birth to the Firstborn Son

The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon 12:1-6



- In verse 2 we see the anguish of the Church which Christ laid upon her
- It is the law of her life that she must bring forth Christ to the world
- It is not simply that she must encounter pain, but that she cannot work deliverance without knowing suffering
- Thus the Apostles felt: the love of Christ constrained them; woe it would be to them if they did not preach the Gospel; necessity was laid upon them; 1 Corinthians 9:16

The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon 12:1-6



- They spoke of themselves as travailing in birth over their children till Christ was formed in them, Galatians 4:19
- This, then, is the picture, the Church fulfilling her destiny even in pain
- The work was to bring forth Christ to men, and never to be satisfied till Christ was formed in them, i.e., till the spirit of Christ, and the teaching of Christ, and the example of Christ were received, loved, and obeyed, and men transformed to the same image

The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon 12:1-6



- Those words are echoed in Isaiah 26:17 which describes the Old Covenant Church's struggle to secure salvation for believers: *"As a woman with child Is in pain and cries out in her pangs, When she draws near the time of her delivery, So have we been in Your sight, O LORD."*
- Throughout her existence Israel, as the Old Covenant Church was waiting for the Messiah
- From the Covenant with Abraham when a holy couple was selected to be the family from which the "holy seed"/Messiah would come

The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon 12:1-6



- To slavery in Egypt, through the Exodus experience and the establishment of the Church at Sinai, to the Kingdom of David, the Exile in Babylon and the return, to the suffering under the Greeks and Romans, Israel was laboring to give birth to the Messiah....a birth that will yield salvation for the entire world!
- Verse 2 also images St. Mary as mother of Christ and of course as the mother of all of us
- Some western scholars say that this woman is the Jewish people, and that the following chapters (12-14) concern the Jews which our Church does not accept

The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon 12:1-6



- Since man's creation, Satan, the "*dragon*" does not stop envying him
- This great dragon is "*red*" and as bishop Victorianus says, this color is because of his deeds for "*he was a murderer from the beginning*" (John 8:44)
- He never stops ruining and demolishing among mankind trying to destroy God's children
- He has *seven heads*, which means he is constantly thinking of this battle

The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon 12:1-6



- The *seven heads* would also denote power and the strength, diversity, and abundance of his thoughts
- He has *ten horns*, which means he is using all the power of his might and dominion, which is extended on earth, to destroy faith
- On his heads *seven diadems*, as he appoints himself as a king over the hearts of the wicked, to dominate their thoughts, their intentions, their senses and their behavior
- Bishop Victorianus thinks, that when the Antichrist comes at the end of times, he will deceive ten kings (10 horns), whom he uses to destroy faith

The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon 12:1-6



- *His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth*, Some think ,that it is an allusion to the Antichrist who will deceive a third of the believers
- But Bishop Victorianus prefers a more proper interpretation, that is, Satan in his fall, had attracted a great number of angels. They fell with him from heaven (Jude 6)
- He is the deceiver of Eve and the enemy of God's people
- He thought that he could put the Lord Jesus to death
- But he will not have victory over the Second Eve

The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon 12:1-6



- As Christ was not from man's seed, death did not conquer Him
- Satan, *dragon*, intended to destroy Mary's seed, Jesus and the Church's seed, the believers in the New Covenant in the blood of Christ
- The mission of the Church is to bring forth in her members the life of Christ before men
- The aim of the wicked spirit is to destroy that life
- The same hostility which was shown to the infant Christ is active against His children, *"If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you."* (John 15:20)

The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon 12:1-6



- There can be no doubt that this *male child* is Christ
- This verse clearly identifies Mary as the woman
- It is the one who will feed His flock like a shepherd, Isaiah 40:11
- It is the one who is to have, not His own people, but all nations as His inheritance, *“I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. ⁸ Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession. ⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.”*
(Psalm 2:7-9)

The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon 12:1-6



- The fact that this child is Christ must not cause us to limit the meaning of the vision to the efforts of the evil one to destroy the infant Jesus; for it is also the Christ in the Church which the wicked one hates
- The efforts of the evil one to destroy are let down
- The child is snatched away and placed out of the range of the dragon's power
- The prince of this world might instigate Israel to take Jesus Christ and with wicked hands crucify and kill Him

The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon 12:1-6



- But the eternal divine life of Him who had power to lay down His life and take it again was beyond the reach of every hostile power
- And after death and resurrection, Christ ascended up where He was before
- But the vision is designed to assure us that, precisely because of this, so all life in Christ is beyond the power of the evil one, and that the forces hostile to good are powerless against that life which is hid with Christ in God
- The Church may be as a weak, oppressed, and persecuted woman, but her faith rises up

The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon 12:1-6



- The contest is between the *male child* and the *dragon*
- And those who in heart and mind ascend to where Christ is know that the contest is not one of mere ideas, but a conflict between the Christ, who is with them always, though He has ascended, and all the powers of evil, which will be smitten down by the rod of His power

The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon 12:1-6



- Now the imagery moves from the "Woman" Mary and her "seed," Jesus, to imagery of the "Woman" as the Church and her "seed" the believers
- Waiting for her new dwelling place; the heavenly Jerusalem, which is prepared for her by God
- The *woman* the Church fleeing, does not signify God's abandonment of her but instead His loving provision
- Christ's faithful Bride (the New Covenant Church) is safe because *"she has a place prepared by God"*, 2 Samuel 7:10; 1 Chronicles 17:9; John 14:2-3

The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon 12:1-6



- The *wilderness* has a rich tradition as a place of safety from trouble as well as a place of temptation and testing
- Unlike Jesus who went to the wilderness to be tempted and Israel who went to the wilderness to be tested, the woman flees to the wilderness to be "saved"
- Fleeing in the wilderness and the mountains away from the severity of the tribulation
- The period of one thousand two hundred and sixty days, which is about three years and a half, indicates all the days that the believers live on earth as strangers

The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon 12:1-6



- In the Church of the Old Testament we find Elijah fleeing from Ezebel's face for three years and half
- And in the Church of the New Testament, we find Virgin Mary with the Lord Jesus accompanied by Joseph the Carpenter, fleeing from Herod's face, who was roused by Satan, (it is said that they sojourned three and a half years)
- Also, at the time of the Antichrist, the Church will suffer from him for about three years and a half
- Again it is symbolic of a broken 7, a number of fullness and perfection and a limited period of time

The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon 12:1-6



- As long as the evil one can be called the prince of this world: as long as the world refuses to recognize her true Prince, and pays reverence to worldliness, and wickedness, and falseness in heart, mind, or life, so long must the Church, in so far as she is faithful to Him who is true, dwell as an exile in the wilderness
- So during the period of time that Satan's wrath is turned on apostate Jerusalem the Church is protected
- She has a place prepared and nourishment

The Woman, The Child, And The Dragon 12:1-6



- God provides her with a tabernacle of safety, Psalm 90:1
- And with the true Bread “which came down from heaven”, Exodus 16:15; Psalm 78:24-25; John 6:49-50
- And with the living water from the Rock, John 4:14, 7:37-39; 1 Corinthians 10:3-4

Satan Thrown Out of Heaven

12:7-12



- The narrative of the woman's flight into the wilderness is suspended that this passage may be inserted
- John unveils this scene in order to explain the preceding passage and answer the question why the "Woman" had to flee into the wilderness
- Once he has explained Satan's rebellion in verses 7-12, John will return to the theme of the flight of the Woman
- *war broke out in heaven*, Michael, the Archangel and protector of the Church and His angels initiated this war

Satan Thrown Out of Heaven

12:7-12



- Michael is named only here in the book of Revelation, in Jude, 1:9 where he is called the Archangel, and in the Old Testament book of Daniel
- Bishop Victorianus thinks, that this is the beginning of the time of the Antichrist. When the Archangel Michael fights against Satan, he overcomes him and makes him fall from heaven, in order to complain no more against the believers.
- As a result of this war, Satan and his angels are cast out of heaven in defeat

Satan Thrown Out of Heaven

12:7-12



- We should not picture the Church as a city under siege by the forces of evil but rather as the Church, a great army attacking the evil forces of the enemy
- It is what Jesus promised us in Matthew 16:18 *"and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. (the Church)"*
- The Church is victorious and Satan is going down to defeat
- *"So he answered, 'Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them'"* (2 Kings 6:16)

Satan Thrown Out of Heaven

12:7-12



- Many of the Church Fathers think that the events that took place in verse 7-9 happened before God created men
- Therefore, this war was initiated by the Archangel Michael to cast out Satan and his followers from Heaven
- They believe that it is not logical that Satan stays in Heaven with the heavenly being after his fall
- Those who support this view use Job 1:7 to say that Satan has no influence on anyone but those who live on earth only

Satan Thrown Out of Heaven

12:7-12



- *“And the LORD said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’ So Satan answered the LORD and said, From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.”*
- The other view thinks that what St. John saw is to confirm the support of Heaven to the Church in her war against evil
- We should not fear any evil, behind the scene there are an army of angels fighting for us, the war is His
- Those who have this view do not want to appoint a certain age or time to this scene

Satan Thrown Out of Heaven

12:7-12



- It is a great victory when Satan falls down from heaven, that he might not complain against us
 - Yet he will not stop deceiving, until his last moments, for he is called:
 - 1- *the great dragon*, as he is huge, severe and fearful
 - 2- *The serpent of old*, This doubtless refers to the serpent that deceived Eve (Genesis 3:1-11; Revelation 20:2; 2 Corinthians 11:3)
- This passage may be added as a proof that the real tempter of Eve was the devil, who assumed the form of a serpent

Satan Thrown Out of Heaven

12:7-12



The word "old" here refers to the fact that his appearance on earth was at an early stage of the world's history, and that he had long been employed in the work which is here attributed to him - that of opposing the church

- 3- *the devil* or "unjust accuser," as he is always accusing the Church
- 4- *Satan* or the stubborn
- 5- *deceives the whole world...* Whose character is that of a deceiver; whose agency extends over all the earth, John 8:44; 1 John 5:19
- *his angels were cast out with him*, All were overthrown; that no enemy of the church would remain unsubdued; that the victory would be final and complete

Satan Thrown Out of Heaven

12:7-12



- The explanation of Michael's victory comes from a *loud Voice in heaven* calling the heavenly assembly to praise God for His marvelous works brought through the Blood of the Lamb
- *the accuser of the brethren ... cast down*, This is another reason for joy and another feature of the salvation
- This representation of a song, consequent on victory, is in accordance with the usual representations in the Bible
- The song of Moses at the Red Sea, Exodus 15
- The song of Deborah, Judges 5

Satan Thrown Out of Heaven

12:7-12



- The song of David when the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, 2 Samuel 22; Isaiah 12, 25
- On no occasion could such a song be more appropriate than on the complete crushing defeat and humiliation of Satan and his rebellious hosts
- *Now salvation*, complete deliverance from the power of Satan
- *Strength*, Now is the mighty power of God manifested in casting down and subduing the great enemy of the church

Satan Thrown Out of Heaven

12:7-12



- *the kingdom of our God*, The reign of our God, Matthew 3:2 That is now established among people, and God will henceforward rule
- *the power of His Christ*, His anointed; that is, the kingdom of Christ as the Messiah, or as anointed
- The result of Michael's victory over Satan is fourfold
- Four is the number of the earth
- Satan is no longer prince of the earth...his dominion over the earth has ended and he has not been able to prevent God's plan for man's salvation

Satan Thrown Out of Heaven

12:7-12



- The fourfold victory is:
- Salvation for the human race
- Strength and Power over Satan,
- Kingdom is established
- All authority for Christ the King of the Kingdom of heaven on earth

Satan Thrown Out of Heaven

12:7-12



- The martyrs who spent their lives in the service of the Lamb shares in Christ's victory over Satan
- They did not die or suffer in vain but are partakers in the victory because they conquered the Dragon by the blood of the Lamb
- The phrase "*they did not love their lives to the death.*" recalls John 12:25 "*He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life*"
- Their victory over him is "owing to" the blood of the Lamb

Satan Thrown Out of Heaven

12:7-12



- Who is he that condemns, when Christ has died?
- What power can the accusations of the adversary have when the Lamb of God has taken away the sin of the world, John 1:29, and when we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus? Hebrews 10:19
- The Christian victory is a victory of dependence and of obedience
- Of dependence on Him without whom they can do nothing
- Of obedience to Him: it is in keeping of His commandments there is great reward

Satan Thrown Out of Heaven

12:7-12



- The words *rejoice*, must be taken to refer to the overthrow of the evil one
- This is the cause of joy in heavens
- Verse 12 ends with a warning
- The woe to the sea and earth is simply a warning voice to all that, though the enemy is overcome and death smitten, yet that he has power, quickened by defeat and fear, for a last struggle
- Therefore they need to be sober and vigilant against the adversary
- His season is short

The Failed Attempt To Persecute The Woman 12:13-17



- This verse explains the reason of the flight into the wilderness mentioned in Revelation 12:6
- The dragon, cast down to the earth, pursues first the woman fleeing into the wilderness; but as she also, like the child, Revelation 12:5, is delivered from his snares, he turns to the conflict against the rest of her seed
- The devil, defeated in his attempts against God in heaven, and foiled in his attack upon the man child - Jesus Christ, now directs his efforts against the woman- the Church
- John's point is that Satan's attack upon the Woman is a direct result of the defeat of Satan his fallen angels at the hands of Michael and his angelic army

The Failed Attempt To Persecute The Woman 12:13-17



- As the dragon wages satanic attacks against the Church, God provides her with "*two wings of a great eagle,*" and she becomes like an eagle fleeing from the Antichrist, not in shame and disgrace but with power
- She wonders in the wilderness away from his wickedness
- As the prophet says: "*But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.*" (Isaiah 40:31)

The Failed Attempt To Persecute The Woman 12:13-17



- Bishop Victorianus thinks, that the two wings of the eagle are the two prophets who warn the believers, and ask them to flee from the Antichrist into the wilderness
- And Fr. Hyppolitus thinks, that they are faith in the Lord Jesus, who compared Himself to a hen that gathers its chicken under its wings
- Many meditate on these two wings, and see that they are needed in every age, and in the life of every believer, to fly wondering in heavenly matters, away from the worldly desires

The Failed Attempt To Persecute The Woman 12:13-17



- Some of them declared that they were faith and deeds, or love of the heavenly matters and the despise of the earthy, or the love of God, and the love of the neighbor, or to desire the glory of God, and the salvation of men
- The opposition of the dragon brings *the woman* the church blessings that she never would have received except in persecution
- Neither the eagle power nor the heavenly sustenance had been hers without the serpent's hate

The Failed Attempt To Persecute The Woman 12:13-17



- Thus is the trial of faith precious in bringing us to know the priceless blessings of heavenly help and heavenly food
- *where she is nourished*, The church would be kept alive
- Once again we have the link to the 42 months, the 1,260 days, the 3 1/2 short period of time that is a time of suffering and judgment
- It is during this time that the "Woman" is safe

The Failed Attempt To Persecute The Woman 12:13-17



- Bishop Victorianus thinks, that this water [points to the multitudes under the power of the Antichrist who persecutes the Church.]
- It seems that the opposition will be extremely severe, and if we apply, what was written in Daniel the prophet (11:31-35) on this period, we learn that the Antichrist enters the churches and defiles the altars; spoils, destroys and encumber the sacrifice
- He allures the believers by all means to drive them away from God, in so much that some who are standing will fall

The Failed Attempt To Persecute The Woman 12:13-17



- The Biblical imagery of water is familiar
- In this case a deadly river of Satan's wrath threatening to overwhelm God's people, Psalm 18:4, 16 *"The pangs of death surrounded me, And the floods of ungodliness made me afraid ...
6 In my distress I called upon the LORD, And cried out to my God;
He heard my voice from His temple, And my cry came before Him, even to His ears"*
- Psalm 32:6, 40:2, 66:12, 69:1,14, 88:17, 130:1, 124:3-6; Job 22:11; 27:20; Isaiah 8:5-8, 59:19; Jeremiah 46:7-8, 47:2; Jonah 2:6; Hosea 5:10 and Isaiah 8:7-8

The Failed Attempt To Persecute The Woman 12:13-17



- God does not leave His children perish this way, *“but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits. And those of the people who understand shall instruct many;”* (Daniel 11:32-33)
- *the earth opened its mouth* ... This is generally understood of some earthly power which is raised up to protect the Church against persecution
- In a mysterious way, every devil-born flood of opinion, or violence, or sentiment, will sink beneath the surface; they rise like a river, they are tasted, and then rejected

The Failed Attempt To Persecute The Woman 12:13-17



- An opening was made sufficient to absorb the waters
- That is, John saw that the church was safe from this attack, and that, in order to preserve it, there was an interposition as marked and wonderful as if the earth should suddenly open and swallow up a mighty flood

The Failed Attempt To Persecute The Woman 12:13-17



- Now that Satan was defeated in his plan to destroy both the Mother and her Seed, he turns in rage against the rest of her seed
- How does John identify these other children?
- *who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ*
- *"Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1 John 2:3-4)*

The Failed Attempt To Persecute The Woman 12:13-17



- The enemy will not give up his attacks
- He can make war upon individual Christians; he may cease to assail the collective Church of Christ, but he can assail Christians by different ways
- However, Satan is fighting a losing battle
- The attempt to sweep away the Christian Church is vain
- Ever since Christ's ascension he has been going down in defeat
- He still rages and struggles but as long the Church Militant is the Church Obedient, the Church will be the Church Triumphant



Discussion

- What is significant about “*the sun,*” “*the moon,*” and “*a crown of twelve stars?*” Why is this woman about to give birth?
- Who or what might the woman represent? List her characteristics as described in this chapter
- Who or what does the “*great red dragon*” represent? What is significant about the “*seven heads,*” “*ten horns,*” and “*seven diadems?*”
- Who does the child represent? Who does the dragon represent?



Discussion

- Why did the woman flee *“into the wilderness”*? What is significant about the period of 1260 days?
- Who are the *“they”* who *“overcame”* Satan? How did they do this? What can you learn from this?
- Who or what does *“the great eagle”* represent? Why does the woman need to *“fly into the wilderness to her place?”* What is significant about the period *“a time and times and half a time?”*
- What is Satan able to do to the woman and her "other offspring"? What is he not able to do?