

# Eschatology

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## Behind the Scenes

### The Woman, Dragon, Male Child and War

One theme that permeates the entire Bible is the desire for Satan to overthrow God and to set himself up as God. The final battles of Satan's long war against God are yet to be fought. They will take place during the last half of the seven-year tribulation period; the time period that Jesus called the "great tribulation" (Matt. 24:21).

In describing the final wars, the inspired apostle John first introduces the main characters involved in them: the woman, the dragon and the male child.

Chapter 12 of Revelation is an important piece of scripture to understand in order to have a firm grasp of the "big picture" of the last chapters in human history. Chronologically, chapter 12 needs to be placed into the timeframe of chapter six. Chapter 12 is described as an interlude. Where chapter six paints us the big picture of the seal judgments, chapter 12 gives us the "behind the scenes" details that help answer the questions: who, what, where and why.

#### [The Woman](#) (Rev. 12:1-2)

The term "sign" in 12:1 describes a symbol that points to a reality. Therefore, John is giving us a symbolic description of a woman, not an actual woman.

In Scripture a woman is frequently used to represent different entities. For example, Jezebel represents a false religion (2:20). The harlot of Rev. 17 is the apostate church of the end time. The bride, the Lamb's wife (19:7) represents the church joined to Jesus in glory. The text of 12:1-2 makes it clear that the woman represents [Israel](#). The OT also pictures Israel as a woman (Jer. 3:1, 20; Ezekiel 16:32-35; Hosea 2:2) whom God will ultimately restore to Himself (Isaiah 50:1).

We can also identify the woman as Israel by the description that the text gives of her:

- **“Clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet”**  
This description is an allusion to Joseph’s dream (Gen. 37:9-11). The sun and moon refer to Jacob and Rachael, the forebearers of Israel and heir in the Abrahamic covenant.
- **“On her head a crown of twelve stars”**  
Represents the twelve sons (tribes) of Israel.
- **“Was with child; and cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth”**  
This refers to the experience of Israel (as a nation) waiting for the coming of her Messiah. The cause of some of the pain is the persecution by Satan, who attempts to destroy the mother.

### The Red Dragon (Rev. 12:3-4)

The dragon is clearly identified as Satan in vs.9. The description that John gives us in vs.3-4 details his history with Israel and his influence on the world governments of the past and in the future.

- **“Seven heads”**  
Represent seven consecutive world empires: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome and Antichrist’s future empire (Dan. 2:31-43; 7:1-12; Rev. 17:9-10).
- **“Ten horns”**  
Represent the ten kings who will rule under Antichrist (Dan. 7:7; Rev. 17:12).
- **“Seven diadems”**  
The shifting of the diadems from the dragon’s heads to the beast’s horns (Rev. 13:1) reveals the shift in power from the seven consecutive world empires to the ten kings under Antichrist (Dan. 7:23-24). It also confirms that three of those kings will be subdued and seven kings will be left with authority (Dan. 7:8,24).

➤ “Swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth”

The references to the dragon’s angels in vs. 7 & 9 make it clear that the “stars of heaven” are angels. When Satan fell (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:12-17), he swept away a third of the angelic host with him. Along with their defeated leader, those evil angels were cast from heaven to earth.

➤ “Stood before the woman to devour her child when she gave birth”

Throughout history, Satan has put all of his efforts towards persecuting the people of God. Since he failed to wipe out the Israelites (the messianic line), Satan attempted to kill Messiah Himself before He could perform His saving work (Matt. 2:16-18).

### The Male Child (Rev.12: 5-6)

Vs.5 is clearly about Jesus the Messiah. By His birth (Is. 66:7), and the promise of Him as King over all the nations (Ps. 2:7-9; Rev. 2:27; 19:15). Also Jesus’ ascension to God the Father is in view here (Acts 1:9; 2:33; Heb. 1:1-3; 12:2).

Vs.6 is a view of the great tribulation period and the faithful to God, heeding Jesus’ warning to flee to the mountains when Antichrist shows himself for who he really is with the desecration of the temple (Dan. 9:27; 11:41; Matt. 24:15-16; Rev. 12:14). It is in the mountains that God Himself will protect and care for His sheep.

### A War in Heaven (Rev.12: 7-12)

There has been war in heaven since the fall of Satan (Isaiah 14: 12-14; Ezekiel 28: 11-18). Satan and his fallen angels have actively opposed both the holy angels and God’s people since Satan’s fall (Dan. 10: 12-13; 1Pet. 5:8).

Verses 7-8 describe the final battle in heaven that permanently casts Satan and his evil angels out of heaven for good.

Vs. 9 is the permanent expulsion from heaven. But notice the detail in John’s description of Satan; it recaps his history from Genesis through Revelation:

- **“The great dragon”**  
The dragon is called great because of his formidable power to inflict harm and bring disaster to God’s people.
- **“The serpent of old”**  
This description identifies him as the serpent in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1ff), emphasizing his subtlety and treachery.
- **“The devil”**  
Literally means “slanderer,” or “false accuser”. Also the word Satan in Hebrew means “adversary.”
- **“The one who deceives the whole world”**  
The use of the present tense indicated that this is Satan’s habitual, continual activity. He lures people to their destruction by causing them to pay “attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons” (1Tim. 4:1). He seduces people to believe him instead of God.

Verses 10-12 describes the celebration that occurs in heaven because of Satan’s defeat and his being cast out of heaven for the last time.

### A War on Earth (Rev.12: 13-17)

These five verses describes three attacks that Satan and his forces will mount against Israel during the tribulation period.

The Greek verb translated “persecuted” means to “pursue” or to “hunt”. The image that John is giving us is that Satan will relentlessly hunt down the Jewish people.

When Satan’s efforts are thwarted by God’s intervention (vs.14), Satan will come attacking towards the Jewish hiding place like a great flood. In the OT, floods symbolize trouble in general (2Sam. 22:17; Job 27:20) and an invading, destroying army (Jer. 26:8; 47:2; Dan. 11:26)

Lastly, when that second effort fails (vs.16), Satan turns all of his fury and energies towards all those people who call on the name of Jesus Christ. No one without the “mark of the beast on right hand or forehead” will be safe (13:16).