

Revelation 12:1-6: And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. ² She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. ³ And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. ⁴ His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. ⁵ She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, ⁶ and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

Intro: Christmas is about the cosmic conflict that came when Christ condescended to conquer!

Christmas is like the D-Day of the universe: **Article:** During World War II, the Battle of Normandy, which lasted from June 1944 to August 1944, resulted in the Allied liberation of Western Europe from Nazi Germany's control. Code named Operation Overlord, the battle began on June 6, 1944, also known as D-Day, when some 156,000 American, British and Canadian forces landed on five beaches along a 50-mile stretch of the heavily fortified coast of France's Normandy region. The invasion was one of the largest amphibious military assaults in history and required extensive planning. Prior to D-Day, the Allies conducted a large-scale deception campaign designed to mislead the Germans about the intended invasion target. By late August 1944, all of northern France had been liberated, and by the following spring the Allies had defeated the Germans. The Normandy landings have been called the beginning of the end of war in Europe.

Christmas, like D-Day, was the beginning of the end of the cosmic war between the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent for the souls of men and women and for the glory of God! Revelation 12 takes us behind the scenes, so to speak, we go behind the curtain to see the heart of what's going on in this cosmic war.

It reminds me of Elisha and his servant surrounded by the armies of Syria in 2 Kings 6:14-17: So he [the King of Syria] sent there horses and chariots and a great army, and they came by night and surrounded the city. ¹⁵ When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" ¹⁶ He said, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." ¹⁷ Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see." So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Sinclair Ferguson: Vs. 1-6: The conquest of Christ on earth

Vs. 7-9: The heavenly aspect of that conquest

Vs. 10-12: The heavenly rejoicing in that conquest and the earthly outworking of that conquest

Vs. 13-17: Take us back to vs. 1-6 & begin to describe what happens now that the dragon has been hurled down to earth, defeated by Jesus Christ, what does Satan do now that Christ has won the victory? He fights the Church.

Brian Tabb-Many interpreters view the dramatic conflict between God & Satan in ch 12 as the heart of Revelation

1. A Protected Pregnant Woman; 2. A Great Red Dragon; 3. A Male Child Who Rules And Reigns

1. A Protected Pregnant Woman

Revelation 12:1-2: And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. ² She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth.

a. The woman: Who is this woman? Eve? Mary? She certainly includes them, but she's more! This woman represents the faithful people of God throughout history, beginning with Mother Israel or Zion but also including New Covenant believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. She is the church of the faithful!

- **Romans 9:4-5:** They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. ⁵ To them belong the patriarchs, and **from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.**

- **2 John 1:1:** The elder to the **elect lady** and her children

Faithful Israel as mother: Isaiah 66:7-8: Before she was in labor she gave birth; before her pain came upon her she delivered a son. ⁸ Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment? For as soon as Zion was in labor she brought forth her children.

In the New Covenant: Galatians 4:25-27: Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶ But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. ²⁷ For it is written, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband."

c. What does it mean that she is clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars?: Genesis 37:9-10: Then he dreamed another dream & told it to his brothers & said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, & eleven stars were bowing down to me." ¹⁰ But when he told it to his father & to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall **I** and your mother and **your brothers** indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?"

This is Jacob (Israel), his wife, and the 12 patriarchs – again the people of God, the covenant people.

d. She is pregnant: She is pregnant with the child Who would save the world! God has miraculously caused this pregnancy. The barren woman theme: Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Elizabeth, Mary – a virgin!

e. She has birth pains, crying out & in agony: For God's people to finally give birth to the Christ Child has not been easy! But God has always preserved the Seed of the woman: **Genesis 3:15:** I will put enmity between you & the woman, & between your offspring & her offspring; he shall bruise your head, & you shall bruise his heel.

2. A Great Red Dragon

Revelation 12:3-4: And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. ⁴ His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it.

Revelation 12:9: And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world (Worked through God's enemies/friends; Pharaoh; Peter)

a. A great red dragon: Red: murder, violence, death, war: **John 8:44:** You are of your father the devil, & your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning

b. Seven heads: The dragon is deceitful and crafty and has a cunning, wicked, evil kind of wisdom.

c. Ten horns: The dragon does have great power; **1 Peter 5:8:** Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

d. Seven diadems: The dragon has authority and influence over others; **Ephesians 2:1-2:** And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience

e. His tail sweeps a third of the stars of heaven down to earth: This speaks of the persecution of believers.

Schreiner: Believers who belong to the Lord who have a heavenly existence [seated with Christ in heavenly places: **Ephesians 2:5-6:** even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved - ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus]

Daniel 8:9-10: Out of one of them came a little horn [Antiochus Epiphanes], which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land. ¹⁰ It grew great, even to the host of heaven. And some of the host and some of the stars it threw down to the ground and trampled on them.

Ian Duguid: This almost certainly refers to saints who were killed during Antiochus IV's reign. It began with the assassination of the high priest Onias III in 170 B. C. and continued to the death of Antiochus IV in 164. Within those few years, he executed thousands of Jews.

So here, like in Daniel 8, the stars refer to the people of God. Satan persecutes the people of God.

Hebrews 11:35-38: Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking & flogging, & even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep & goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated - of whom the world was not worthy - wandering about in deserts & mountains, & in dens & caves of the earth.

f. The great, red dragon is waiting to devour the child: Cain; Noah; Esau wanted to kill Jacob; God, through Joseph, saves the seed from famine; Moses – Exodus; Saul tried to kill David; David killed Goliath; Esther; Bethlehem (Herod) – **Bethlehem is like the cosmic D-Day!**

3. A Male Child Who Rules And Reigns

Revelation 12:5-6: She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule/shepherd all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, ⁶ and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

a. Verse 5 gives us a brief summary of the work of Christ in His first coming: Jesus is the male child!

Dennis Johnson: This terse statement encapsulates the life, suffering, and exaltation of Jesus: he was born, he was caught up to God, and he shares God's throne of infinite authority. **GOSPEL!**

b. Jesus is the one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron: This is a quotation from **Psalm 2:8-9:** Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. ⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Greg Beale and Sean McDonough: Whereas the LXX and Revelation have “shepherd”, Ps. 2:9 has “smite.” Either reading is possible from the . . . Hebrew text. John may in fact have both meanings in mind: compare Rev. 19:15, where he uses “shepherd” to mean “judge” or “destroy”; in Rev. 7:17 it has the positive nuance of “shepherd.” Accordingly, the “authority” that Jesus received in fulfillment of the psalm is understood to be the authority that a king wields in protecting his subjects and defeating his enemies.

So Jesus ruling or shepherding the nations with a rod of iron means He will feed the nations; He will give rest to the nations; He will guide the nations; He will protect the nations from their enemies, and He will destroy their and His enemies. In all of this, He will love the saints of the nations, and He will judge & destroy wicked nations!

c. The woman flees to the wilderness: V6: the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

The people of God flee to the wilderness, the place of safety, provision, protection, and testing.

Kistemaker: The image of desert evokes the account of Israel's forty-year stay in the Sinai peninsula, Elijah's flight to that same desert, and John the Baptist's sojourn in the desert of Judea. Paul also spent time in a desert, the one in Arabia. Three factors emerge from spending time in a desert: a person is completely dependent on God to

provide the material and spiritual necessities of life; the desert is always a temporary place; and last, the desert is a place where God trains his people spiritually and prepares them for service. Thus, the members of the church depend on God to be their provider and protector; they also realize that their stay on earth is but temporary; and they know that they are being trained for more extensive duties. Just as Israel's time in the desert of Sinai was temporary while the Israelites longed for permanence in the Promised Land, so the church today waiting on earth longs to be with Christ forever.

Dennis Johnson: The time period symbolized in 1,260 days encompasses the church's ongoing experience of suffering and safety, bold testimony and bitter trial, alienation in the desert but nourishment from God, from the time of Jesus' ascension to heaven until the trauma that precedes his glorious return.

Satan is still at work today: in your personal relationships; marriages; churches (Quotation from Peacemaker)

Ephesians 6:12: For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Hymns: O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free Thine own from Satan's tyranny; From depths of hell Thy people save; and give them victory o'er the grave!

Rank on rank the host of heaven spreads its vanguard on the way; As the Light from Light, descending from the realms of endless day; Comes the pow'rs of hell to vanquish as the darkness clears away.

And we could add: Come, Thou long expected Jesus, Born to set Thy people free – by destroying the works of the devil and conquering sin, death, and hell!

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant – only because King Jesus came and was faithful and triumphant in our place as the warrior King Who has defeated all of our and His enemies!

What Child is this, who, laid to rest, On Mary's lap is sleeping – He's the male child Who destroyed the one who has the power of death, that is the devil so that we might live forever!

Hark! The herald angels sing, Glory to the newborn King! - He is worthy! He has triumphed! He has won the victory!

Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere; Go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ has slain the great red dragon forever!

Silent night! Holy night! All is calm, all is bright – before the greatest battle and conflict this world has ever seen and Jesus Christ has prevailed that we might have perfect peace, pardon from all sin, and perpetual pleasure in His presence!

Joy to the world! The LORD is come! Let earth receive her King! - He rules! He reigns! He has overcome the Devil!

Brandon Meeks: Christmas is war. I don't mean fighting the hustle and bustle of the holiday havoc. I mean that the central point of Christmas is war. Christmas is not about a cooing newborn giving everyone a jolly case of the "warm and fuzzies." Christmas was a cosmic clash of titanic proportions. One writer said, "Bethlehem was the opening gambit [the opening event or action] in the last campaign of a long and bloody war." For millennia, two seeds represented two sides in the great conflict; the Seed of the Woman and the seed of the serpent. The Seed of the Woman came to establish an everlasting kingdom in enemy territory.

Her Seed would lay siege to the very gates of hell and He would prevail. He was not coming to set up a small outpost for refugees on the fringes of some supposed “neutral territory.” This is a state of total war and He was coming to win it. John tells us that Christ was “manifested to destroy the works of the devil.” That means that “peace and goodwill toward men” would only be realized through superior strength and overwhelming force in battle. This was anything but some saccharine, sappy sentimentalism. The work of Christ would mark the toppling of the enemy’s “Dark Tower.” Darkness would finally be crushed because the Light of the world had come and the darkness could not overcome it. Death would finally lay trampled underfoot because the Prince of Life would vanquish him that had power over death — the “Prince of Darkness Grim.” Martin Luther had it right. We tremble not for him . . . That little Word [Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh], a helpless infant held in the arms of His mother was at the same time the Eternal Word, upholding all things by the word of His power. That little Word, who in the beginning turned chaos into cosmos, had come in flesh to do it all over again. God chose the weapon in His armory for this war — a baby. David testified truly when he said in Psalm 8, “Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger.” This little baby spelled big trouble for evil. Herod knew it too . . . but that heathen madman and his hellish massacre could not stamp out the Seed. Although the serpent had grown into a great red dragon, he could not destroy the Promise. God hid one fledgling child in Egypt [he's referring to Moses] centuries before and now He would do it again. God would send Him back for one final Exodus. Christmas reminds us of our mission to liberate the prisoners of war who have been held hostage by an already defeated foe. Christmas reminds us that proclaiming liberty to the captives means taking off the chains that bind them, as well as announcing that the war has been won. The chains of guilt and shame, the chains of injustice and inequality, and the chains of hostility and malice all must be stripped away. When we say “Merry Christmas” we are saying “Tyranny is over.” Peace came through conflict. Good will toward men came through ill will toward Christ. Joy has come to us because Jesus has come to us. He bought our joy with the gold of His blood and the silver of His tears. The Glory of God in the highest has appeared to the lowest, and He has lifted us out of the dunghill and has seated us among princes. We are traversing the earth with the good news of the victory of the Son of God. With each step of Gospel progress, “He comes to make His blessing flow far as the curse is found.” “Merry Christmas” is a battle cry that insists that one day the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Hymn (Robert Southwell): This little Babe so few days old; Is come to rifle [throw, hit kick] Satan's fold
All hell doth at His presence quake; Though He Himself for cold doth shake
For in this weak unarmed wise; The gates of hell He will surprise.

With tears He fights and wins the field; His tiny breast stands for a shield
His battering shot are babish cries; His arrows looks of weeping eyes
His martial ensigns [badges of war, war emblems] cold and need; And feeble flesh His warrior's steed.

His camp is builded in a stall; His bulwark but a broken wall
The crib His trench, haystalks His stakes; Of shepherds He His army makes
And thus, as sure His foe to wound; The angels' trumps the charge now sound.

My soul with Christ join thou in fight; Stick to His tents, the place of might
Within His crib is surest ward [place of safety; place of being guarded; inner chamber of a castle or fortress]; This
little Babe will be thy Guard
If thou wilt foil [prevent from succeeding] thy foes with joy; Then flit not [don't go away] from this heav'nly Boy!

1 Timothy 6:12: Fight the good fight of the faith.

2 Timothy 4:7: I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Ephesians 6:11: Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

Romans 16:20: The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

John Piper: the reason it's your feet is that we are in Christ & his triumphs will be our triumphs . . . Romans 16:20 is a glorious promise to beleaguered saints in times & places where it seems as if evil has the upper hand & Satan is devouring the world. And it is a warning not to give up & change sides. It is an encouragement to keep on being vigilant against falsehood and idolatry & to "be wise as to what is good & innocent as to what is evil."

Revelation 12:10-11: And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. ¹¹ **And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.**

Song: We have overcome! We have overcome!
By the blood of the Lamb; And the Word of the LORD!
We have overcome!

Christ Jesus Is The Greatest Sign
Both Man And God Truly Divine
Came Down In The Fullness Of Time
His Birth Made All God's Glory Shine
But That Great Dragon's Cruel Design
Stood To Devour And Malign
With Heads And Horns And Sour Wine
Christ Drank God's Wrath And Curse Combine
He Died And Rose To Death Confine
No More To Haunt His Pure Bloodline
The Dragon's Crushed, Cast Out, Benign
By Faith Alone Christ Calls You "Mine!"
And Rules With Rod Of Iron Hardline
So Come To Christ The Greatest Sign
To Him All Hopes And Fears Resign
He'll Grant You Joys And Peace Sublime
And Move Your Heart To Sing And Rhyme!