



This ministry is dedicated to a progressive understanding of truth apropos to the last generation to live on earth.

Welcome to *EndTime Issues...*

Christ is called “Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6 – NKJV). The dragon is called that old serpent, the devil, Satan, accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:9-10). These two leaders are in a final, intense conflict. The world will soon choose *one or the other* of these “lords.” Those decisions will be irrevocable.

He Hates This Woman

Revelation 12

Introduction

The dragon’s loathing and attacks against God’s church become graphic in this chapter. This devil is the source of stunning hostility and strife. He is an opportunist, wanting to hurt and persecute God’s people.

Satan is chronically enraged because his eventual defeat was assured at Christ’s resurrection. Fascinating – as his true nature is finally expressed and opened to the universe, God sets a time limit on his last fiendish work.¹ This heinous being, with his minions, will then be banned forever from hurting the saints at the end of that proscribed time of three and a half years (12:6, 14; 13:5).

Satan harms and hurts but cannot prevail.² The futility of his schemes becomes central in this and the next four chapters.³ Yet, suffering will be part of the experience of God’s people in this final confrontation between good and evil. “*Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also*” (John 15:20).⁴

¹ Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 451.

² Beale, Gregory K.; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan – 1999), pp. 622-623.

³ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 452.

⁴ Mounce, Robert H.; *The Book of Revelation* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1977), p. 229.

Before entering this new vision, we are brought, once again, into the heavenly sanctuary as a prelude to what follows.

- “Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm” (Revelation 11:19).
- The initial focus is on the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies. The context: Day of Atonement. This timing orients us when entering Revelation 12.⁵ Those dramatic celestial and earthly signs will occur later when the temple comes, once again, into view (16:17-21). This text covers a broad sweep of end-time prophecy!

The drama of the lightnings, voices, thunderings, earthquake, and great hail portray the end of God’s divine justice for planet earth.

A Great Sign

“Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars” (Revelation 12:1 – NKJV).

After John observes the heavenly temple scene, he now sees a “*great*” sign. There are seven signs that represent unique spectacles pointing toward the consummation.⁶ This is the first.

- This woman symbolizes God’s faithful church – His ideal for His followers. It depicts a loyal, dedicated group of covenant believers, soon focused on the last days (12:17, chapters 13–16).

That unique woman/church symbol is referenced in the Old Testament (Isaiah 54:5-6, Jeremiah 3:20, Ezekiel 16:8-14, Hosea 1-3, Amos 5:2) and in the New Testament (II Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25-32; Revelation 19:7-8, 22:17).⁷

“Although the woman may be [viewed as] an individual, a study of these references suggests that she is a collective figure,”⁸ a body of believers. She is unique.

- The imagery emphasizes the faithfulness of the saints during their wandering in the “*wilderness*” (vss. 13-17).⁹ This covers the span of Christian history from its inauguration to its consummation.

This lady is clothed with the sun, meaning that she reflects the glory of Christ (Revelation 1:16; cf. Matthew 17:2). This church is covered with divine honor because of her trustworthy devotion to Him.¹⁰

⁵ Doukhan, Jacques B.; *Secrets of Revelation* (The Review and Herald Publishing Association; Hagerstown, MD 21740), p. 106.

⁶ Mounce, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

⁷ Stefanovic, Ranko; *Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Andrews University Press, Berrien Springs, MI; 2002), p. 378.

⁸ Ford, J. Massyngberde; *Revelation* (The Anchor Bible Doubleday, New York), p. 195.

⁹ Beale, *op. cit.*, pp. 625-626.

¹⁰ Brighton, Louis A; *Revelation, Concordance Commentary* (Concordance Publishing House, Saint Louis), 1999, p. 326.

- She is in obvious contrast with the soon-to-be-introduced dragon in 12:3.
- Her saga quickly highlights the conflict between Christ's followers and Satan's – a three-and-a-half-year epoch.

"It is as true now as when Christ was upon earth that every inroad made by the gospel upon the enemy's dominion is met by fierce opposition from his vast armies. The conflict that is right upon us will be the most terrible ever witnessed. But though Satan is represented as being as strong as the strong man armed, his overthrow will be complete, and every one who unites with him in choosing apostasy rather than loyalty will perish with him."¹¹

"He will turn his forces against those who are loyal to God; but though he may cause pain, distress, and human agony, he cannot defile the soul. He may cause affliction to the people of God as he did to Christ, but he cannot cause one of Christ's little ones to perish. The people of God in these last days must expect to enter into the thick of the conflict; for the prophetic word says: 'The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.'"¹²

The moon under the woman's feet stresses her reign or dominion over the earth.¹³

The twelve stars echo the twelve divisions of the 144,000 (Revelation 7:4-8). They also echo the twelve tribes of Israel, anciently comprising God's "original church." Here, the segments of the end-time church are pointedly portrayed.

- A crown or wreath (*stephanos* – G) was a reward of victory in a contest or struggle (not a royal crown).
- Christ, the rider of the white horse in the first Seal (Revelation 6:2), was given a crown of victory. That "horse group" represents the 144,000 going out "*conquering*." Their mission will be successful (Revelation 11:7a).

Between Revelation 12 and 17, there are seven main signs or prophetic waymarks, related to the last days of earth's history¹⁴:

1. Woman – the last-day church
2. The dragon – Satan
3. The man-child – the Christ child
4. Michael – the redeemer Christ
5. "Israel" – the end-time saints – the remnant of the woman's seed
6. The sea beast – the antichrist
7. The earth beast – a nation in rebellion – later, noted as a false prophet (Revelation 16:13, 19:20, 20:10), apostate Christianity¹⁵

¹¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 407.

¹² *The Review and Herald*, October 29, 1895.

¹³ Osborne, *op. cit.*, pp. 456-457.

¹⁴ Aune, David E.; 52B World Biblical Commentary; Revelation 6–16 (World Books; Dallas, Texas), 1997, p. 679.

¹⁵ Walvoord, John F.; *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Moody Press, Chicago, IL; 1966), p. 187.

“She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth” (Revelation 12:2 – NIV).

Unavoidable is an initial impression of the Christ child (a male) and His mother (Mary).

Though this *“woman”* sign is seen in the sky, it is an earthly reality. Intriguingly, this *“mother”*-to-be and child are not named.¹⁶ There is no reference to this Messianic child’s life. It/He is quickly swept upward into heaven. The seer clearly wants the student to focus on the church after His earthly tenure.

The birth pains represent great trials in birthing the Christian church. It is not directly of Christ (baby, child, or adult). It is of the covenant community – the woman is giving birth to the New Testament church. From the Old Testament into the intertestamental period, its Messianic anticipation was difficult, painful, through agonizing expectation and *“delay.”*¹⁷ Osborne addresses major *“distress of the people of God”*¹⁸ who gave rise to that church!

The woman *“cries out”* is in the historical present. John telescopes *“eons of time”* into one decisive moment.¹⁹

Filled with joy at God’s special entrance into history, the seer suddenly witnesses the enemy of that church!²⁰

Before the birthing event, the dragon becomes another sign that is seen in the heavens (here, the word *“great”* is absent). A monster, a frightening intruder, appears. Like the serpent intercepting Eve in the garden, this creature intercepts this woman in labor!

“And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads” (Revelation 12:3).

Immediately, this dragon is understood as an archenemy of God and His people.²¹ Its appearance in the sky suggests that all should see and understand who this is.

- This is the same devil that presented to Eve disobedience as a virtue.²²
- It is a malicious creature.

This is the woman’s antagonist – both are signs in the sky.²³ This dragon is a monster focused on striking a mortal blow to the woman’s baby upon delivery.

- *“Red”* signals malice, the murderous character of Satan, blood:

¹⁶ Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 628.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 629-631.

¹⁸ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 458.

¹⁹ Tonstad, Sigve K.; *Revelation* (Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI; 2019), p. 177.

²⁰ Doukhan, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

²¹ Mounce, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

²² Doukhan, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-109.

²³ Aune, *op. cit.*, 682.

“It symbolizes Satan slaughtering the people of God, as in the “red horse” of 6:4 and the shedding of “the blood of the saints” (16:6; 17:6; 18:24) by Satan’s followers. Jesus called Satan ‘a murderer from the beginning’ (John 8:44), and the dragon is personified as ‘Death and Hades’ (Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14).”²⁴

- Seven heads, a number of “perfection,” highlights the unparalleled deceptive power of its leaders, especially in Revelation 17.
- “Seven diadems” means that its key leaders have arrogated power.²⁵ They are a coalition of Satan’s most fearsome leaders at the end.
- “The ten horns recall the fourth beast of Daniel 7, awesome and powerful with its great iron teeth and ten horns (Dan 7:7,24). That the beast out of the sea has ten horns and seven heads (Rev 13:1; cf. 17:12) indicates that Satan’s earthly emissaries are like him in their destructive power.”²⁶ These represent ten regions the world is currently divided into toward a global coalition.²⁷ (Another study – Revelation 17.)

Most fascinating: The beast from the sea in chapter 13 will be described in a similar manner regarding its heads, horns, and diadems. The beast in chapter 17 is red and has ten horns and seven heads (see on 13:1ff. and 17:3-4; cf. 12:9, 12). These parallels suggest that “the devil performs his oppressive will against the church and world through his kingly representative on earth.”²⁸

A parenthetical statement is now made regarding the dragon’s ancient past: “*Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth*” (Revelation 12:4a – NIV). It deceived one third of the angels in the past who now are his earthly minions in evil. Satan’s nature was so deceptive, that many of those giant minds were convinced to follow him.

The story of the lady in labor continues.

“*The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that it might devour her child the moment he was born*” (Revelation 12:4b).

Anticipating the prophetic fulfillment of the Messiah, with His coalition of believers, the dragon positions himself to destroy the baby named Jesus (Luke 1:31) immediately upon delivery. He becomes a focus of Satan’s warfare against God. Only after the “baby” escapes His clutches and is safe in heaven does he spew significant hatred against the woman (12:13).²⁹ The church then becomes his object of vented hatred.

The idea of a serpent/dragon standing seems unusual since it was relegated to “*crawl on its belly*” (Genesis 3:14). In ancient lore the standing dragon was waiting to devour someone.³⁰ The verb is not, however, *focused* on someone who stands but in its use references “the

²⁴ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 459.

²⁵ Mounce, *op. cit.*, p. 233. Tonstad, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

²⁷ Fowler, Franklin S., Jr., M.D.; *When “The” Church Rides the Beast*.

²⁸ Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 634.

²⁹ Brighton, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

³⁰ Thomas, Robert L.; *Revelation 8–22 – An Exegetical Commentary* vol. II (Moody Press, Chicago, 1995), p. 125.

relationship between the one who stands and something else.” – like an enemy in combat ready to pounce. No other time would a woman (God’s people, His church) be so vulnerable as it emerges, waving its banner of truth!³¹

All this explains the violent antagonism with which Jesus met when on earth – from King Herod’s heinous murder of babies and children to calvary.³² It further clarifies why the early Christian church was born with so much persecution and uncertainty.

“She gave birth to a son, a male child, who ‘will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.’ And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne” (Revelation 12:5 – NIV).

“This ‘male child’ is ‘destined’ to shepherd all the nations with a rod of iron. This is a quote from Ps. 2:9, which is also ... [repeated] in Rev. 2:27 of the church ruling with Christ and in Rev. 19:15 of the coming of Christ to ‘strike down the nations.’ As discussed at 2:27, it pictures the shepherd’s club ‘dashing [the nations] to pieces like pottery.’ Thus, we have moved from the birth to the ascension to the Parousia in one fell swoop, for it is clear in 19:15 that this will not finally consummate until the eschaton. The ‘nations’ are the earth-dwellers, the inhabitants of ‘Babylon the Great,’ who will follow and worship the beast (13:7-8; 14:8; 17:15; 18:3, 23). They are to be destroyed by the sword from Christ’s mouth (19:15). First, however, they become the means by which the dragon persecutes the ‘woman,’ here undoubtedly the whole people of God, the church.”³³

- In verse 5 there is no reference to Christ’s ministry.
- It appeared as though the devil had won, but the resurrection handed the victory to Christ.
- Interesting – John’s main interest is not in the human Jesus but in the exalted Christ who is able to help His people in times of distress.³⁴
- The words *“caught up to heaven”* are forceful and depict God’s absolute protection. This is an allusion to the prophecy of Psalm 2:7-9. The imagery suggests that He was snatched away in the last moment of time – or perhaps the right moment in time.³⁵ This symbolizes what will happen to the remnant just before Christ comes again. The threat of death will disappear at the deliverance of God’s people (Daniel 12:1).

Ruling with a *“rod of iron”* looks forward to the time when the mission of grace conquers and His universal kingship has commenced.³⁶

In Luke 1:31-32 angel Gabriel told Mary that her male child soon to be born would rule the house of Jacob on the throne of David.

³¹ Tonstad, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

³² Mounce, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

³³ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 463.

³⁴ Stefanovic, *op. cit.*, p. 383.

³⁵ Tonstad, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

³⁶ Brighton, *op. cit.*, p. 330.

The ruling, shepherding authority of the Christ child will be shared by God's people! In the letter to the Thyatira church, every victorious Christian will shepherd them (the nations) with a rod of iron.³⁷

Once the Messiah was in heaven, Satan had no further access to Him, so he again redirects his animosity toward the woman – the corporate body of believers.³⁸ Again, this commences the satanic war against the Christian church.

Escape into the Wilderness

“The woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days” (Revelation 12:6 – NIV).

The wilderness symbolizes a place of hiding, testing, divine comfort, and protection. The sovereign act of God to protect His people is announced. There, He will “nourish” or take care of His church. This echoes the “*wilderness table*” in the presence of its enemies (Psalms 23 and 78).

“It is important once more to realize that this does not mean the people of God will be protected from persecution or martyrdom (see Rev. 6:9-11; 10:8-10; 11:2, 7-8; 13:7) but rather indicates spiritual nourishment and protection. Satan ... [could] kill them but in turn be defeated by them (23:22).”³⁹

The flight reported in verse 6 receives more detailed treatment in 12:13-17.⁴⁰

Scholars have struggled to decide if there are two separate wilderness experiences in this prophecy. Both appear, however, to represent the same experience. Commensurate with similar prophecies in Daniel and Revelation, it appears that this apocalyptic setting refers to a single time period when linked with other parallel references in Daniel and Revelation.

A cosmic scene is in view, from a Christ child to His immediately being “*caught up to God,*” “*His throne*”, and assuming the rule of “*all nations.*” The Lamb is on the throne (5:6), which is finally labeled the “*throne of God and the Lamb*” (22:1). A sweep of redemptive history moves toward earth's last days.

- Osborne convincingly notes that the futurist view is the primary meaning. The imagery describes the church ***during the final period of human history*** when Satan and his agents intensely seek to persecute and destroy it. However, God “nourishes” His beleaguered people.⁴¹
- With the throne imagery as anchor points, redemptive history is swept into its closing scenes.

³⁷ Brighton, *op. cit.*, pp. 330-331.

³⁸ Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 464. Mounce, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

⁴⁰ Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

⁴¹ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 464.

That 1260 Time Period

The 1260 days is a third of five delineations of a three-and-a-half-year period that depicts the final stage of human history (“42 months” in 11:2; 13:5 – related to Satan and his minions; “1260 days” in 11:3, 12:6 – related to God’s people; and “time, times and half a time” in 12:14 – associated with distinct prophecies, expressions). As elsewhere, it echoes its origination in Daniel 7:25 and 12:7.⁴²

Why the three and a half years? This is one half of a Sabbatical cycle! It echoes the importance of this time from Old Testament probation periods (II Chronicles 36:20-21; Jeremiah 25:9, 11-12, 29:10). But why half of a Sabbatical cycle? Where is the other half? Is there somewhere another half of a 7-year Sabbatical? Though not part of this study, the weight of evidence suggests it is found in Daniel 9! There, Christian history is inaugurated; here, it is consummated!

Inauguration of Christ’s Kingdom – A prophetic reflection, prophetic insert

In 12:9 the dragon is cast out of heaven. That privileged place of accusations against God ceased. Now planet earth has become his heinous laboratory for evil: “Satan deceiveth the whole world” (Revelation 12:9).

Yet, grace came down with greater power to thwart the devil.

“Christ did not yield up His life until He had accomplished the work that He came to do, and with His parting breath He exclaimed, ‘It is finished.’ The battle had been won. His right arm had gotten Him the victory. As a conqueror He planted His banner on the eternal heights. Was there not joy among the angels? All heaven triumphed in the Saviour’s victory. Satan was defeated and knew that his kingdom was lost.

“Could one sin have been found in Christ, had He in one particular yielded to Satan in order to escape the terrible torture, the enemy of God and man would have triumphed. Christ bowed His head and died, but He held fast His faith in God.”⁴³ That victory assured Satan’s ultimate defeat.

“Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: ‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down’” (Revelation 12:10 – NIV).

Voices from heaven are frequently referenced in the apocalypse, mainly from angels giving commands and, later, from the redeemed giving praise. Here, this “*loud voice*” is a single voice. Who it is, is not identified. It, however, celebrates the arrival of the Messianic kingdom of God and Christ. Outcome?

“Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. He had revealed himself as a murderer. By

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 464-465.

⁴³ *The Signs of the Times*, August 9, 1905.

shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted. Whatever attitude he might assume, he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ's brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken."⁴⁴

With this anthem, salvation is assured and heralds the defeat of the dragon and, at last, the deliverance of the saints (Daniel 12:1).

With a great sweep of history, the victory of heaven's investment into redeeming sinful man is recorded. Though the fall of Lucifer/Satan appears here as an "eschatological event,"⁴⁵ a *primordial* fall is assumed.⁴⁶ These texts collectively reveal salvation, victory, power, kingdom, and Christ's authority!

Satan's role as an accuser finds its classic expression in Job (1:6-12, 2:1-5). By virtue of Christ's death, this being is "*cast down*," now unable to lodge a successful charge without a salvic rescue plan in place (Romans 8:33-34).⁴⁷

"But they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives so much that they were afraid to die" (Revelation 12:11 – NET).

The brothers and sisters who took advantage of heaven's wonderful salvation overcame the attacks of Satan. Their deterrents? The blood of the Lamb and the "*word of their testimony*."

- The power, protection, and shield of the blood spilled from Gethsemane through Calvary was the conquering weapon.

In Revelation we are told that the conquering Ram was also the slain Lamb, whose blood purchased "people for God" from all sectors of the world (5:9-10, 1:5-6). Truly, the saints have been made white in the blood of the Lamb (7:14). That blood of Christ is the basis of every victory.⁴⁸

- The saints' testimony, based on His Word, gives special power against sin. (cf. John 8:31-32, 15:3).⁴⁹

"It is clear that the church at this final period of terrible persecution does not go into hiding so as to avoid the wrath of the beast but maintains its evangelistic efforts to the very end. Thus, they refused to live for themselves.... Jesus' teaching on discipleship ... [makes] clear that the true follower ... [places] him above everything."⁵⁰

⁴⁴ *The Desire of Ages*, p 761.

⁴⁵ Aune, *op. cit.*, p. 695.

⁴⁶ Tonstad, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

⁴⁷ Mounce, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

⁴⁸ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 476.

⁴⁹ Beckwith, Isbon T.; *The Apocalypse of John* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI; 1967), pp. 626-627.

⁵⁰ Osborne, *op. cit.*, pp. 476-477.

The faith in Jesus and the saints' obedience are two elements, actually imperatives, for the church to become triumphant. This victory refers to their evangelistic confession of Jesus, not their blood, though they did not fear martyrdom.⁵¹

- This pictures end-time heroism of the saints.
- It portrays the loyalty to Christ of the last-day church (cf. John 12:25; Matthew 10:39, 16:25; Mark 8:35-36; Luke 9:24, 17:33). This was exemplified by Paul (Acts 20:24, 21:13; Romans 8:38-39, Philippians 1:20) and Christ (Philippians 2:8).

This brings to mind Christ's advice to the Smyrna church: "*Remain faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life*" (Revelation 2:10 – NET).⁵²

For a period of time, Satan's victory is earthly but temporary. The saints' victory over him will be final and eternal.⁵³

The suffering of the saints becomes a sign of their victory over Satan.⁵⁴

The martyrs' language of Revelation 6:9 and 11 is best taken figuratively as applying to all Christians who suffer in one form or another. This is understood from chapters 2 and 3, where the "*overcomers*" alludes to all the churches and not a few (cf. Matthew 10:38-39). Revelation 6:9 and 12:11 together help to define that victory. Suffering becomes part of the lot of the church as the end gets nearer.⁵⁵

The word "*loved*" in the phrase "*loved not their lives*" is *agapao* in Greek. They do not face a martyr's death foolishly.⁵⁶

Time Now Short

"Therefore you heavens rejoice, and all who reside in them! But woe to the earth and the sea because the devil has come down to you! He is filled with terrible anger, for he knows that he only has a little time!" (Revelation 12:12 – NET).

Satan is aware of the timing prophecies and knows that his opportunities to spread evil have become limited. Deliverance of God's people is just three and a half years away in the final context of this prophecy (Daniel 12:7). Christ's return is expected soon. First, the sins of God's people must be placed on Satan, just like the scapegoat in ancient times.

Christ's kingdom will then displace Satan's kingdom. The inauguration of the devil's defeat came when Christ cried, "*It is finished.*" Its consummation comes when the sins he has caused all the saints to commit, and that Christ removed, will be placed to his charge.

A divine legal process is in view.

⁵¹ Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

⁵² Stefanovic, *op. cit.*, pp. 389-390.

⁵³ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 475.

⁵⁴ Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 663.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp-665-666.

⁵⁶ Walvoord, John F.; *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Moody Press, Chicago, IL; 1966), p. 193.

The devil knows that when Christ comes, He will be assigned to a thousand years in the “abyss” – confined to earth without anyone to tempt. That represents a great millennial “rest,” void of any human sin. All have been translated to heaven or died at His coming. It becomes Satan’s time to reflect.

“Here he will be confined, to wander up and down over the broken surface of the earth and see the effects of his rebellion against God’s law. For a thousand years he can enjoy the fruit of the curse which he has caused. Limited alone to the earth, he will not have the privilege of ranging to other planets, to tempt and annoy those who have not fallen. During this time, Satan suffers extremely. Since his fall his evil traits have been in constant exercise. But he is then to be deprived of his power, and left to reflect upon the part which he has acted since his fall, and to look forward with trembling and terror to the dreadful future, when he must suffer for all the evil that he has done and be punished for all the sins that he has caused to be committed.”⁵⁷

“When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent’s reach” (Revelation 12:13-14 – NIV).

This woman symbolically morphs from the Messianic mother to the last day, believing, witnessing community. The dragon wants to silence or destroy it. He is in a “time crunch.” This verse continues the saga of verse 6, where it was promised that she would not have to fend for herself.⁵⁸

“Then the serpent spouted water like a river out of his mouth after the woman in an attempt to sweep her away by a flood” (Revelation 12:15 – NET).

This “pursuit” reveals that Satan will not leave God’s people alone, even in their place of refuge. The water it spewed out suggests an attempt of deadly persecution. But – God caused the earth to remove that lethal deluge. The serpent’s mouth issued deceit in the Garden of Eden. Many suggest that this also has an apocalyptic meaning of inflicting harm to God’s people, especially since the word “*serpent*” is used. But – this is synonymous with a death decree that God never permits to be carried out – at the very end of that three and a half years.

- The woman is faced with persecution and deception.
- The church’s existence is in danger, related to its response.⁵⁹

“But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth” (Revelation 12:16 – NIV).

One can envision that the satanic rage is seething. The wilderness is initially a symbol of protection. Now the earth symbolically does the same, removing the threat of “drowning.” God

⁵⁷ *Maranatha*, p. 313.

⁵⁸ Tonstad, p. 185.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 186-187.

is supernaturally protecting His church. His authority is preserved, and the devil is, once again, defeated.⁶⁰ God's people are delivered!

Christ is inseparably united with those who received Him by faith (Matthew 25:45). The pursuit of the woman, God's people, is similar to Pharaoh's pursuit of Israel (Exodus 14:8): "*Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself*" (Exodus 19:4). The water from the dragon's mouth was like the Nile River – but God made a way on dry land.

Though she has been given the wings of an eagle to fly above the flood waters of persecution, God found it necessary to "*swallow up*" those waters. Even David notes that if God had not been by his side, the torrents and floods of evil would have engulfed him, and he would have perished (Psalm 124:2-5; cf. Isaiah 43:1-2).

Jesus promised that the "*gates of hades will not overcome*" His church (Matthew 16:18).

The dragon could not destroy the Christ child. He could not destroy the early Christian church. So, he now will attempt to destroy her seed. This is the last-day church with its individual members. The dragon is livid!

"Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring – those who keep God's commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus" (Revelation 12:17 – NIV).

Expositor White notes: "Zechariah's vision of Joshua and the Angel applies with peculiar force to the experience of God's people in the closing up of the great day of atonement. The remnant church will be brought into great trial and distress. Those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus will feel the ire of the dragon and his hosts."⁶¹

"In the near future we shall see these words fulfilled as the Protestant churches unite with the world and with the papal power against commandment keepers. The same spirit which actuated papists in ages past will lead Protestants to pursue a similar course toward those who will maintain their loyalty to God."⁶²

How the dragon does this is detailed in the next chapter in a coalition between Satan, the sea beast (the papacy; cf. Revelation 17) and the earth beast (the United States under the authority of Protestantism).

The dragon "*went away*" or "*went off*" to make war, which suggests that he mobilizes to prevent another failure.⁶³

"The text indicates that at the end of time, as the whole world renders their allegiance and loyalty to Satan and his allies (Rev. 13:4, 8), God will have a people ... who will be

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 875-876.

⁶¹ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 472-473.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 449-450.

⁶³ Tonstad, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

unreservedly faithful and obedient to him in keeping his commandments and holding to the testimony of Jesus.”⁶⁴

They will be/are the brothers and sisters in Christ (cf. Romans 3:29, Hebrews 2:11), regardless of nationality. This is a focus on the faithful who represent the symbolic 144,000 that merge into a number too great to count (Revelation 7).

Noteworthy is Aune’s reference to the commandments of God as including “Sabbath observance.”⁶⁵

This stresses “the ongoing perseverance of the church in obeying God ... the church’s testimony about Jesus as based on Jesus’ testimony for God. In other words, the church’s faithfulness is made possible by and modeled after Jesus’ faithfulness. On the basis of 12:11, however, their testimony about Jesus has primacy here, as in the parallel 6:9; 19:10; 20:4. Indeed, these two aspects, obedience and faithful witness, are the two keys to the church’s victory both through the ages and in this final period of the cosmic war.”⁶⁶

What Satan hates, God loves – His church. At the end, God wins.

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⁶⁴ Stefanovic, *op. cit.*, p. 395.

⁶⁵ Aune, *op. cit.*, p. 710.

⁶⁶ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 485.