

## LEARNING TO INTERPRET REVELATION

### Rev. 12:1-17

Introduction: The blowing of the \_\_\_\_\_ trumpet began THE GREAT AND TERRIBLE DAY OF THE LORD. (Rev. 11:15)

Revelation 12-14 gives us an \_\_\_\_\_ of general conditions in the last half of the tribulation. I refer to Rev. 12 as THE COSMIC DRAMA because it is a \_\_\_\_\_ drama in the heavens shown to John. We know it is symbolic because John tells us at the very beginning that a \_\_\_\_\_ appeared in heaven. But it is symbolic of very \_\_\_\_\_ events, not just vague principles. Because the chapter is a record of the signs John saw, we need to read it all before applying our tools of interpretation.

*Revelation 12:1–17 1 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. 2 Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.*

*3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. 4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. 5 She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. 6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.*

*7 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, 8 but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. 9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

*10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. 11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. 12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."*

*13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. 14 But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. 15 So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. 16 But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. 17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

To understand this passage, we need to answer two questions:

**Who do these characters in the drama represent?**

**What are the events pictured by this cosmic conflict?**

## I. WHO DO THESE CHARACTERS IN THE DRAMA REPRESENT?

We are tempted to start with the sun clothed woman because she is the most mysterious of the four members of this cast. However, her identity will be clarified by the identities of the others, so it is wiser to do them first.

- A. **The dragon** described in verses 3 and 4 is the easiest identification of all because verse 9 tells us plainly.

*Revelation 12:9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

\_\_\_\_\_ of Revelation = \_\_\_\_\_ of Genesis = \_\_\_\_\_ who accused Job = \_\_\_\_\_ who tempted Jesus

- B. Identifying **the child** is also easy.

*Revelation 12:5 She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.*

If we search our online Bible for “rod of iron” we find Rev. 2:27, which we examined previously in our study. In it the Risen Christ identifies \_\_\_\_\_ as the One appointed by the Father to rule the nations with a rod of iron. **The Child born to the woman is clearly \_\_\_\_\_.**

- C. Now, back to the sun clothed woman.

*Revelation 12:1–5 1 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. 2 Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.*

*3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. 4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. 5 She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.*

1. If we only had verses 1 to 5, we might concur with our Catholic friends that the sun clothed woman represents \_\_\_\_\_, the earthly mother of Jesus. We might not understand the meaning of the sun, moon, and stars around Mary, but we might be willing to agree none the less.

But we also have verse 6,

***Revelation 12:6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.***

**We have verses 13-17 that say**

- the \_\_\_\_\_ persecuted the woman,
- and tried to kill her as she \_\_\_\_\_ into the wilderness.

However, Mary \_\_\_\_\_ fled to the wilderness for three and a half years. History tells us that she lived in Jerusalem until she went with the apostle John to \_\_\_\_\_ where he became pastor of the church there. She lived the rest of her life in that place.

So, who is the sun clothed woman?

**2. Could the woman be the church? \_\_\_\_\_**

- **Jesus did not come from the church.**
- **The church came from Jesus!**

3. Actually, the most mysterious part of the description of the woman leads us to the answer and causes all the facts to fit.

Let's do our word search in the Bible for sun, moon, and stars all together. We find 14 verses. In all but one of them, the sun, moon, and stars, are simply the sun, moon, and stars. But in one verse, they are clearly symbolic of something else.

**Genesis 37:9 Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me."**

When we read the whole context, we discover this is the \_\_\_\_\_ of Joseph.

- **What nation was that dream about? \_\_\_\_\_!**
- **What nation gave birth to Jesus the Christ? \_\_\_\_\_!**
- **Who does Daniel say will have to flee from the Antichrist for 3 ½ years? \_\_\_\_\_!**

**Who are the characters of THE COSMIC DRAMA?**

- **The woman is Israel.**
- **The dragon is the \_\_\_\_\_.**
- **The Child born is Jesus.**
- They are joined by **Michael, the \_\_\_\_\_ and the other holy angels.**

## II. WHAT ARE THE EVENTS PICTURED BY THIS COSMIC CONFLICT?

### A. The war in heaven

*7 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, 8 but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. 9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

Scripture tells us that Satan has been cast out multiple times in the history of the world.

1. When he rebelled he was cast out of heaven as his \_\_\_\_\_.
2. During the tribulation he will be cast out of heaven and cast to the \_\_\_\_\_.
3. At the end of the tribulation he will be imprisoned in the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. At the end of the Millennium, he will be cast into the Lake of \_\_\_\_\_ for all eternity.

Rev. 12:9 records the \_\_\_\_\_ of these “casting outs.” **When he is cast down this time, earth will become his \_\_\_\_\_.** This is why the second half of the tribulation is even worse than the first. Jesus called it the \_\_\_\_\_ tribulation.

***Revelation 12:12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.”***

Those in Heaven will rejoice for the devil is gone, the devil is banned. Woe to those who remain on the earth, because the devil in all his wrath will come down.

- Satan will possess the \_\_\_\_\_ and empower him to persecute those of Israel who do not escape to God’s protected place.
- Through the antichrist Satan will also persecute what Christians remain who were saved earlier in the first half of the tribulation, beheading them for refusing to take the \_\_\_\_\_ of the beast.
- At the same time, God’s righteous \_\_\_\_\_ will fall upon the earth more ferociously than ever before.

We will see what the rule of antichrist shall be like when we study the next chapter, Rev. 13.