

## Revelation Chapter 12 – John Karmelich

1. This lesson is called, "Understanding God's Game Plan".
  - a) Before I begin, I want to share that this chapter is important to me personally. Many years ago, when first studied this chapter is when understood God's "big game plan" for mankind. I felt like a light went off in my head.
  - b) Chapter 11 explains God's the key points of His redemptive plan in word pictures. In these 17 verses, we are going to deal with God, Jesus, Israel, angels, the devil, demonic creatures, saved and unsaved people. No problem. ☺
  - c) Since there are only 17 verses, this chapter does skip a few details. ☺ The important point of this chapter is that it lays out God's redemptive plan for mankind in word pictures.
2. Let's summarize where we are in Revelation:
  - a) Revelation is about Jesus Second Coming. We've had chapter after chapter of "earth judgment" in preparation for the event itself. One reason God drag's out this event is to give one big "last call" to the people on earth to repent. The punishment on earth has gotten progressively worse. It is God saying in effect, "OK, if that particular judgment didn't get your attention and have you repent, try this one on for size". ☺
  - b) The last two chapters were a break from the judgment process to focus in on some details:
    - i) John was told to measure the temple and count the people in that temple.
    - ii) Then the text described two human witnesses who will be specifically sent to Jerusalem to be God's witnesses.
    - iii) The last part of Chapter 11 focused back on God's throne room where people were praising God in effect by saying, "Now it is the time for the wrap up process". It is showing gratitude to God for sending Jesus to rule from the earth.
  - c) Chapter 12 starts another vision. It is God saying to John in effect, "Put everything you've read so far on hold while I explain the big picture."
3. With that said, let me summarize the chapter:
  - a) The chapter opened with a description of a woman "clothed with the sun, moon and stars" giving birth to a male-child who will rule the world. A dragon tries to kill her child before it was born. The child lived and was taken up to heaven. The woman who gave birth had to run for safety from the dragon. Then there was a war in heaven and the dragon and his followers lost the war. The dragon was then cast to the earth where the dragon went after the woman and her other offspring.
    - i) Confused? Welcome to the club! ☺ All of this is explainable if one understands the word-pictures behind this vision. I'll break it down as we go through the text.
  - b) Here's the first key to understanding this lesson: The word is "sign".
    - i) Verse 1 says John saw a "sign" in heaven.
    - ii) That means we're dealing in word-pictures as opposed to a literal woman and a literal dragon. It is designed to be word pictures.
  - c) So why word pictures? Why doesn't God be blunt about all of this?
    - i) For starters, the human mind remembers pictures better than facts and figures. That is why your computer screen has a bunch of little pictures (icons) to click on as opposed to having us type out detailed commands. Our minds remember pictures better than it does facts and figures.
    - ii) Next, God wants us to "think about these things". Putting this story in the form of word-pictures helps us to contemplate what is happening.
    - iii) For example, the woman in these word-pictures is "Israel", the dragon is Satan (this is stated in the text). Her son is Jesus and the "rest of her offspring" are believers. This word-picture story is about salvation from heaven's perspective.

- d) What Chapter 12 is doing is giving us the heavenly perspective of human history. It talks about the existence of Satan, his rebellion against God and other demonic creatures that follow Satan. This chapter uses word-pictures about our salvation through Jesus Christ and Satan's ultimate destruction.
    - i) What I'm going to get into in this lesson is the "why" question: For example, God created Satan and his demonic followers. What was God's purpose in doing this? Why did Satan rebel in the first place? How does that affect our lives?
    - ii) The idea is not to give every possible answer, but to focus on our "motivation". The short answer is Satan exists as a motivating factor to keep us close to God. If it's not bad enough that we mess up on our own, God allows this demonic world to exist to keep us close to Him through prayer. To put it another way, "God and us make a majority". Through prayer, we can overcome any adverse demonic situation that comes our way.
  - e) OK, I pretty much know that Jesus died for my sins, the devil exists and all that stuff. Why should I care? What I hope you get out of this lesson is not all the details, but to understand mankind's role in all of this. When I first understood it, it motivated me to become a stronger Christian. I understood my little part in human history as it relates to God's eternal plan. In other words, knowing God's plan for mankind should motivate us to draw closer to God and to work for Him as part of His eternal plan.
    - i) If all of this is confusing, hang in there. Let's go through the lesson and discuss our motivation as a Christians through this lesson.
4. Chapter 12, Verse 1: A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head.
- a) The first word to notice is "sign". This is a "sign" in heaven. The verse mentions a woman. Since this is a sign, it is not a literal, historical female figure, but a word picture.
  - b) It is helpful at this point to remember a couple of rules about interpreting the bible:
    - i) Rule #1: Read the text in context. In order to properly interpret the text, study the surrounding text. Unfortunately, Chapter 12 is a new topic so there isn't much text from Chapter 11 that can help us. There is a lot more information about this woman in the rest of the chapter, and that gives us clues as to its meaning.
    - ii) Rule #2: Read the text in context of Revelation. Look what else is said about this woman in Revelation. Unfortunately, all that is said is in Chapter 12.
    - iii) Rule #3: Read the text in context of other writings by the same author: Again, John also wrote Gospel of John and 1st, 2nd and 3rd John. No clues are there.
    - iv) Rule #4: Read the text in context of the rest of the bible. This is the key. One must remember that the bible is consistent in its themes and "rules about God" from book to book. My point of these four rules is "context" is the key to understanding Revelation. Sometimes context means the entire bible as a reference.
  - c) Now lets apply those rules and figure out who is this "woman" in Verse 1:
    - i) Verse 2 says this woman is pregnant.
    - ii) Verse 5 says this woman's child is to rule the world. That sounds pretty Jesus-like to me. ☺ This "could" be the Virgin Mary, based on this sentence.
    - iii) Verse 6 says this woman fled to the desert for 1,260 days (i.e., 3 and one half years) so that God could protect her. Reading Verse 6 in context of the last chapter, this is talking about the "Great Tribulation". This may rule out "Mary" as a possibility. I don't think the Virgin Mary is on earth through this time period.
    - iv) Verse 17 says the dragon (Verse 9 bluntly states the dragon is Satan) goes after the rest of the woman's offspring. Again, that doesn't sound like Mary to me.

- v) My point of this little exercise is to show this woman does not represent Mary. She doesn't "fit the text". I make a big deal about this because the Roman Catholic Church in the Middle Ages incorrectly interpreted this as Mary.
  - d) Another theory about this woman is that it is "the church".
    - i) If this woman represents the church, we have a problem because this woman is "pregnant" as stated in Verse 2. I don't think the church (symbolically speaking) gives birth to anything. Paul refers to the Christian church as a "virgin bride" (Ref.: 2nd Corinthians 11:2). In Verse 17, this woman gives birth "to the rest of her offspring". Therefore, this "woman" word picture here is not about the church.
  - e) The key to understanding this verse is to compare Verse 2 to something in Genesis:
    - i) Revelation 11:2 says, "A woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head."
    - ii) Genesis 37:9 says, "Then he (Joseph) had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." (NIV)
      - a) The next verse of Genesis says, "When he (Joseph) told his father (Jacob) as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?"
      - b) This is the famous story of Joseph's dreams. Joseph had a dream of the sun, moon and eleven stars bowing down to worship John. In Verse 10 of Genesis 37, Joseph's father Jacob understood that the sun and the moon represented Joseph's mother and father and Jacob understood the eleven stars represented Joseph's 11 brothers.
      - c) Here in Revelation we have a sign with a moon, sun and "12" stars. The signs are the same if you count Joseph as an equal with his brothers.
    - iii) The point of all of this is to understand this woman represents the Nation of Israel.
      - a) Since we can't interpret this verse from Revelation-only, we look elsewhere in the bible and the only other place this same symbolism is used is in this text in Genesis 37.
  - f) I spent over a page on this point, as once you understand this woman represents the nation of Israel, the text is "downhill" from there. Let's move on to Verse 2 and we can understand this a little better.
5. Verse 2: She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.
- a) We will learn that this offspring of the woman represents Jesus. How does the Nation of Israel "give birth" to Jesus? What about the virgin birth? Don't forget Mary was Jewish. Don't forget that Jesus comes through a long line of Jewish people. It was through Jesus' Jewish ancestry that a Messiah was promised.
  - b) Let's step back and look at the big picture: Why did God "require" a nation of people, (i.e., Israel) in order to bring Jesus into the world? Why didn't Jesus just die on the cross after Adam and Eve sinned and then we could all look back to that moment in time?
    - i) The reason I'm bringing up this question here gets back to my introduction theme. It is about understanding God's redemptive plan for mankind.
    - ii) God's goal was and is to get as many people as possible to accept Jesus as the Messiah. God waited for thousands of years to send Jesus 1) to show through history how sinful mankind is without Him and 2) to give as much historical evidence as possible that Jesus is the Promised Messiah (i.e., king).
    - iii) God set up a large group (Israelites) to be His witness group to the world. That group would have prophets who predicted the coming of a Messiah (i.e., king).
    - iv) The words of those prophets were preserved in the Old Testament. Those prophets told of other things that came true to validate themselves as prophets.

- v) If you wanted to claim you were "sent by God", the only way to prove it is to make lots of predictions about the future and watch all of them come true. Since God exists outside of time, He could tell prophets of future events that will occur.
    - a) Those "short-term" predictions validated the prophet. Those same Jewish prophets would then give long-term predictions that tied to Jesus.
  - vi) The reason I'm getting into all of this here is to understand why God formed the Nation of Israel. Their primary purpose was to be God's witness of His existence to the world. They were given the responsibility of bringing the Messiah into the world. They were also in charge of preserving the Old Testament writings for us to study. (Whether you realize it or not, I just summarized Romans Chapter 10!)
  - c) All of this, surprisingly, does lead back to Verse 2: She (Nation of Israel) was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.
    - i) Remember that Satan's goal is to either stop or "slow down" God's redemptive plan for mankind. I believe Satan understood from the time of the Garden of Eden that his days on earth are limited and that God would send "himself" (Jesus) to pay the price for sins. I believe Satan understood that in the end, he loses. Therefore, Satan wants to slow down his end as long as possible.
    - ii) One way Satan tried to slow down his end is to prevent the birth of the Messiah to begin with. It is interesting to reread the Old Testament from the perspective of an attempt to kill the lineage of the Messiah. Throughout the Old Testament, there were numerous attempts to kill off all of Israel. As God "focused" who would be the Messiah, so would Satan's attacks. Let me give you some examples:
      - a) The Egyptian Pharaoh killed all the male babies knowing there was a promise of a redeemer. (Ref.: Exodus 1:22) One can see Satan working behind the scenes in order to stop the Messiah from coming to the world.
      - b) During the time of Esther, a man named Haman plotted to kill the entire Jewish race. Can you see Satan's motivation behind this?
      - c) When King Herod found out a "promised Messiah" was born in Israel, that king sent out orders to kill all the male babies under two years old in Bethlehem. (Ref.: Matthew 2:16) Joseph and Mary fled out that night. Again, can you see Satan's motivation behind this?
  - d) Getting back to Revelation Chapter 12, Again, I believe this baby is Jesus. Her "mother" in this word picture is Israel in the sense of Israel giving birth to the promised Messiah. The verse said she "cried out in pain" as she was about to give birth.
    - i) Remember all of this is a "sign". It is not about a literal woman and literal birth pains. It is about the suffering that Israel had to endure in exchange for the promise of having the responsibility of being the "Chosen People."
    - ii) One might ask what about all the suffering that has happened to Israel since Jesus? We'll cover that topic later in this lesson.
6. Verse 3: Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads.
- a) The first thing to notice about Verse 3 is the word "sign" appears again. The point here is that this is not a literal dragon, but some sort of word-picture.
  - b) The good news is we don't have to speculate about who is this dragon. Verse 9 says, "The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan."
    - i) If you've ever wondered why the devil is shown as being red with horns, now you know. It ties to Revelation 12 and the picture of Satan as a red dragon. In reality, Satan is described as beautiful angel until he rebelled (Ref. Ezekiel 28:13-15).
  - c) So why is Satan pictured as a dragon? The Greek word is "drak-on" so the English word is transliterated from the Greek. It literally means a large serpent. It can be tied to the Garden of Eden because it was a serpent that tempted Adam and Eve.

- i) Again, this is a sign. Satan is not literally a dragon, but being compared to one.
  - ii) The idea of a dragon is one of a large, ferocious beast that basically, causes damage. It is the idea of a terrible, evil monster.
- d) Back to the verse: This dragon had "seven heads and ten horns".
  - i) The good news is the bible interprets this text for us. Remember one of the interpretation rules is to look elsewhere in the same book! The next chapter describes a "beast" which we will learn is the antichrist. The description of the antichrist also has seven heads and ten horns in Chapter 13.
  - ii) Chapter 17 interprets this: Revelation 17:9 says, "The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while."
    - a) First of all, Revelation 17:9 also mentions a woman. Chapter 17 has a different symbolic woman word-picture, and we'll deal with that later.
    - b) Again, the "dragon" sign here in Chapter 12 represents Satan as stated in Verse 9. Chapters 13 and 17 deal with a "beast" that we'll learn is the antichrist. Both the dragon and the beast are described as having "seven heads and ten horns". Since the antichrist "reflects the work" of Satan, the word-pictures are connected.
    - c) The verse here in Chapter 12 also says there are "seven crowns" on the dragon's head. That would also tie to the "seven king" connection.
  - iii) Again, Revelation 17:9 says, "the seven heads are seven hills". We'll discuss this more in Chapter 17, but "seven hills" are associated with Rome. Rome is known then and now as "a city built on seven hills". One has to remember that John wrote this during a time of Christian persecution by Rome. John needed to write about Rome "in code" in order for Revelation to be passed around.
  - iv) Revelation 17:9 also says that, "They (seven heads) are also seven kings. Five have fallen (past tense), one is (present tense), the other has not yet come (future)."
    - a) I added in parenthesis the fact that these "seven hills" represent seven kings. Five are fallen kings in that they no longer rule or exist. One is present tense at the time of John writing Revelation and one is future.
    - b) When John wrote Revelation, there was five great empires that had existed: 1) The Egyptian Empire, 2) The Assyrian Empire, 3) The Babylonian Empire, 4) The Mede-Persian Empire and 5) Greek Empire.
    - c) It might help to think of empires in terms of control over Israel. For example, no Chinese Empire is relevant, as it never ruled over Israel.
    - d) At the time of John's writing Rome ruled over Israel. That was the sixth king that is "present tense". There is also a 7th king that is future tense.
  - v) Putting this all together, the text is implying that Satan is "behind" the seven great empires that ruled over Israel. Remember that one has to read this text in terms of geographical context. The focus of the text is on Israel, where Satan is trying to stop God's plans. This is the "center point" of the Great Tribulation.
- e) Remember this word picture of a dragon had seven horns and ten heads. I just spent over a page explaining these seven horns on this dragon's head. The good-news is that the "ten horns" of Revelation Chapter 12, Verse 3 can be explained much faster. ☺
  - i) Again we have the answer in Revelation 17: "The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast." (Revelation 17:12-13 NIV)
  - ii) What this means is Satan (through the antichrist) will lead a "team" of 10 kings. These kings give their power and authority to the antichrist in Chapter 17.

- f) Putting it all together, Verse 3 of Chapter 12 is an introduction to Satan's purpose during the Great Tribulation. Before Revelation, five empires had ruled over Israel. When Revelation was written, Rome ruled over Israel. In the future, there will be another great empire, lead by the antichrist. There will be "10 leaders" under the Antichrist.
    - i) That is a summary of the "seven heads" (i.e., the seven empires over Israel) and the "ten horns", (i.e., the ten kings that rule under the antichrist). If this is still confusing, be patient. We'll explain this much more in later chapters.
  - g) Now let's get back to my theme: "Understanding God's Game Plan":
    - i) The purpose of Revelation is to "reveal" to us God's plans involving Jesus Second Coming on Earth. There is a big judgment period prior to the actual event itself. It is God's "last call" to see who wants to be saved before it is too late.
    - ii) Satan knows that whenever this event occurs, his time is now very limited. Therefore Satan also makes this "concentrated effort" to stop God's redemptive plan from happening. Thus, Satan organizes this final world empire with the ultimate goal of trying to prevent God's Game Plan from happening.
    - iii) Remember that God created Satan. God also gave him free will. Ultimately God wins, but a (not the) purpose of all of this is to show God's power is greater than the power of any "thing" created by God, including Satan himself and all of his forces. Another purpose is to get people to pick the winning side in the battle! ☺
7. Verse 4: His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth.
- a) The "tail" refers to the dragon. The text says the tail of the dragon swept a third of the stars out of sky and flung them to earth.
  - b) The question of the moment is, what do the "stars" represent? Verse 4 says that the dragon (Satan) took a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. In order to interpret the text, we have to go back to our interpretation rules. The basic idea of interpretation is "context". The verse needs to be read in context of the chapter.
    - i) We know this is "sign" as stated in Verse 3. Therefore, we can rule out literal stars. A literal dragon cannot drag literal stars to earth with its tale. We can rule out a literal interpretation because it is not possible.
    - ii) Earlier in the chapter, this woman word-picture had 12 stars around her head. That refers to the Nation of Israel. I can't see Satan dragging the saved-Jewish people out of heaven down to earth, so that can't be the correct interpretation.
    - iii) Way back in Chapter 1, there was another word picture where stars are described as angels. (Ref.: Revelation 1:20). If stars were compared to angels in Chapter 1, it would be logical that the same interpretation should be true here in Chapter 12. It would also be "logical" that demonic angels followed Satan from heaven.
    - iv) Tying this all together, the tail of the dragon (i.e. Satan) took a third of the (demonic) angels with him to earth. If Satan took a third of the angels of heaven, the idea is that one third of all angels joined in Satan's rebellion.
  - c) Here is some strange things to think about:
    - i) Angels must have free will. You get the impression that the angels choose to join in the rebellion. Either that, or Satan has such power as to force these angels to join them. The question is why would these angels choose to join Satan?
    - ii) Now contemplate this question: Do these demonic angels believe Jesus is God? I would argue yes. They simply choose not to follow Jesus as God. That is a "test" for human salvation. People can argue God exists. People can believe Jesus is God. The test is whether or not one chooses to obey Jesus as God.
    - iii) So why would these angels willfully chose to disobey God? The question stems from the issue of why would Satan choose to rebel against God?

- iv) There is a passage in Isaiah 14:12-13 that says in effect, Satan wanted to be "like God". The idea is Satan was a "top angel" in heaven and wanted to be in charge instead of submitting his life to God. (Sounds a lot like us, doesn't it? ☺)
  - v) Beyond that, it is speculation. Maybe Satan didn't like the idea that God wanted to focus His love on humans as opposed to angelic life. Maybe Satan thought that saving humanity wasn't worth it and opposed God's redemptive plan.
  - vi) For whatever reason Satan choose at that moment in time to rebel against God. The fact that He tempted Adam and Eve tells me He didn't want man to be redeemed and wanted man to join him in his rebellion against God.
  - vii) Getting back to the text, the point is Satan got a third of the angels, who we call demonic angels to join in Satan's rebellion. That is the point of this verse.
8. Verse 4 (cont.): The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born.
- a) Now we are back to the birth of Jesus. It will be clearer the "child" in this word-picture is Jesus when we get to Verse 5. The point here is back to the idea that Satan "focused his attack" on Jesus himself. Satan understood that God would send Jesus to rule the world one day and that would be Satan's "end" when it happened. What Satan didn't know at the time was all the details. I believe he didn't understand the "cross" until it happened.
    - i) My point here is to see Verse 4 as a "word-picture" of Satan's attempt through the life of Jesus on earth to get him to avoid the cross. That attack came as early as Herod killing the babies and continued all the way prior to the cross itself.
    - ii) The Gospels record Satan himself trying to tempt Jesus (Matthew 4, Luke 4). The point of those temptations was to get Jesus to show off his power, which was not God's will for Jesus at that moment in time. Satan was trying to get Jesus to not please God the Father by Jesus not doing God's will at that moment in time.
    - iii) The Gospels said that Satan "entered" Judas when He betrayed Jesus. (Ref.: Luke 22:3, John 13:27). Satan thought by killing Jesus, He could not rule the world and begin the reign associated with Jesus Second Coming. Satan didn't fully understand the purpose of Jesus dying for our sins until it happened.
  - b) The point of this sentence is to show that there was "spiritual warfare" even during the time Jesus was on the earth:
    - i) Ever notice in the Gospels how many people were cured of demonic possession? Did it ever occur to you that these demons were "focused" on being near Jesus during the time He was on the earth?
    - ii) Even when Jesus was on the cross, people where saying in effect, "If you really are the Messiah, come down from the cross and we'll believe you". (Ref.: Matthew 27:40, et. al.) You can read that as a temptation to avoid the payment of the cross.
9. Verse 5: She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.
- a) OK, first question, who is the "she" of this verse? It is the "woman" we've been discussing from this text. (I know you knew that, but I wanted to remind you. ☺)
  - b) The son is Jesus, because, well, this is Revelation. ☺ The book is about Jesus Second Coming and the events around that fact. Part of Jesus "job" in the Second Coming is to "rule all nations with an iron scepter".
    - i) We know this text is not about His First Coming, because let's face it, Jesus didn't rule "all the nations". He may rule over individual's hearts, but not over all nations. This text is focusing on the Second Coming of Jesus.
    - ii) When Jesus was born, a promise was made to Mary that Jesus would one day rule from "David's throne". (Ref. Luke 1:32) Well, Jesus never did that in His First Coming. David's throne is to be king over Israel. God promised David that a king would come and rule the world from David's throne (Ref.: 2nd Samuel 7:13).

- c) Notice that this verse deals with Jesus First and Second Coming in one verse. It mentions the "birth" of Jesus (First Coming), and Jesus ruling the nations (Second Coming).
  - d) What does an "iron scepter" mean? That means Jesus rules by force. We'll get more into that in Chapter 20. The idea is Jesus will rule over the world whether the world likes it or not. Jesus will rule the world by force. There are no elections. ☺
  - e) I should pause here and give some disclaimers: Many commentators disagree with this view. Some see Jesus "ruling with an iron scepter" tying to the fact that Jesus rules over our hearts and those who refuse will be sent to hell. This view is more common in Roman Catholic writings and some traditional Protestant denominations. The views I'm laying out here are more commonly held among Evangelical scholars.
10. Verse 5 (cont.): And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.
- a) Obviously, "baby Jesus" was not crucified, and again, we're dealing in word pictures.
  - b) The important point of this sentence is Jesus was "resurrected". He was taken up into heaven after He died.
  - c) Notice the term "God's throne". Remember the prediction given to Mary is that Jesus would rule from "David's throne". That is different from God's throne. My point is Jesus is now in heaven, and one day He will come and rule from earth.
11. Verse 6: The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.
- a) If you recall from the last lesson, we had a big discussion about "1,260 days". A Hebrew calendar has twelve 30-day months. (They occasionally add a month to catch up.) The point is if you dived 1,260 by 30, you get 42 months or three and one half years.
    - i) In addition, in the last lesson, we had a big discussion how the "Great Tribulation" is a seven-year period. Here in this verse, the "woman" word-picture says she fled into a place prepared for her by God for 1,260 days.
    - ii) So why is God specifying this 1,260 day time frame? For those of us who hold a literal 7-year tribulation period, the theory goes that the "last-half" is the worse part. Putting together many verses from all over the bible, the antichrist makes a peace deal with the Jewish people at the start of the seven years. At the halfway point, he "does a double cross" and then persecutes the Israelites. Getting back to Verse 6, it is about God protecting the Israelites during this time period.
  - b) Back to the verse: This verse is saying in effect that this "woman" (Nation of Israel) is protected by God for 1,260 days. This woman flees into the desert where she is taken care of during this time period. What does that mean, and why should I care? ☺ To understand this, one has to understand God's promises to the Nation of Israel.
    - i) God promised Abraham that his descendants (i.e., the Nation of Israel) would inherit the land of Israel as a permanent home. (Ref.: Genesis 12:7) This was an unconditional promise of God. There are still unfulfilled prophecies in Ezekiel 48 how the Nation of Israel will divide the land by tribe one day.
    - ii) My point here is God can't fulfill this promise to Israel unless the nation is "still around" in the first place! The nation of Israel must be protected during the Great Tribulation in order to be preserved.
    - iii) The application to you and me is to understand how God works: When God makes unconditional promises, we must accept them as fact. There is nothing we or the devil can do to stop those promises from happening. It should affect our prayer life as well. We pray based on God's unconditional promises to us and not our own "goodness". If you read the Psalms carefully, you will often notice that people ask for blessings not based on their own goodness, but God's goodness. The idea is to trust in God's unconditional promises.



- iv) The text says the woman (Israel) will flee to a desert place. So where is this "desert place" the Israelites flee to at that time? Most scholars argue it is the city of Petra, in what is today part of Jordan. The ancient name is Bozrah. If you read Micah 2:12-13 (See the King James Version), Micah predicts the Israelites flee to this city during this time.
  - v) We'll come back to the "woman fleeing in Verse 13. Now we change topics.
12. Verse 7: And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. <sup>8</sup> But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. <sup>9</sup> The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.
- a) If things weren't strange enough so far, it is about to get worse. ☺
  - b) The topic switches from a woman-word-picture to a war in heaven. Someone named Michael leads an army of angels to fight a dragon. The text says the dragon is Satan in Verse 9. Michael wins and the devil is kicked out of heaven and sent to earth with the demonic angels that are with him. As I like to say, any questions so far? ☺
  - c) This leads to all sorts of questions: How does a war in heaven take place anyway? Do angels actually die in this war? How exactly is Satan kicked out of heaven? Why is he allowed there in the first place? If "God is God", why did He allow this battle in this first place? Couldn't God just "snap His fingers" and kick Satan out? Some of these questions we can never answer. This is one of those places where one has to accept the text and focus on what the text does say as opposed to these "how did it happen" questions.
  - d) Let's start with the "Michael" question. Who is this character?
    - i) In the bible, there are only two angels ever mentioned by name. One is Gabriel who did the duties of announcing Jesus birth and the other is Michael.
    - ii) Michael is mentioned 3 times in Daniel, once in Jude and once here in Revelation.
    - iii) In Jude, it says Michael is an "archangel". That means he is a leader of angels. Understand that angels have army-like ranks. That means there is the equivalent of a "general, sergeant, private", etc. Apparently, Michael is a top ranked angel.
    - iv) Now lets look at Daniel 12:1: At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then." (NIV)
      - a) That "time of distress" ties to the Great Tribulation.
      - b) Michael is "the great prince who protects your people". Since God was talking to Daniel, "your people" refers to the nation of Israel.
      - c) Putting this all together, Michael is a "top angelic general" who leads a charge of "good angels" to be victorious over Satan.
  - e) Next question: Why is Satan in heaven anyway? Why is he being "kicked out" now?
    - i) It is best to read Verse 10 and then answer that question:
13. Verse 10: 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 Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.
- a) Back to the Satan question: Why is he in heaven anyway? Verse 10 calls Satan (second sentence) "the accuser of our brothers".
    - i) The word devil means "slanderer". Think of a prosecuting attorney in a court case. That attorney is trying to sway a judge to find someone guilty. The word "Satan" means adversary, or our "opponent". In other words, Satan is working against us.
    - ii) Satan has access to heaven. His role in heaven is to be the "prosecuting attorney" against mankind. His role is to say, "Why are you bothering to bring salvation to those people? Look at how much they are sinning!"

- b) Onto the tougher question: Why does God allow Satan in heaven? What's the point?
    - i) Remember that Satan understands that one day he will be the chief prisoner in hell. There are only "x" number of people who will be saved. Once that number is reached, Satan is sent to hell forever. We'll get to that in later chapters.
    - ii) Therefore, Satan does whatever he can to delay that event. He tries to have unsaved people killed so they can't declare their allegiance to God. He tries to make you and I ineffective witnesses for God so we don't save more people. Further, He spends time in heaven trying to convince God not to save people.
    - iii) One must understand Satan is not "all-knowing" like God. He watches our behavior and then is our "prosecuting attorney" to God. Satan knows that God allows bad things to happen to us in order to test our faith. Satan "encourages" that before God in order to make us ineffective witnesses. (Whether you realize it or not, I just summarized some key points about the book of Job.)
    - iv) The other key point is that nothing can stop you and I from our salvation. If the most powerful evil force created cannot stop you and I from going to heaven by Satan's accusations, then one can have assurance of salvation. In other words, God is more powerful than Satan is. One reason He allows Satan in his presence is to show us that we as humans can still "win" despite Satan's presence.
    - v) Luckily, the guy is kicked out permanently once we begin to spend eternity there.
  - c) One question I've ignored is some of the "how" issues: How is Satan kicked out? How is there a war in heaven? That is not explained. Where the bible is silent, we should be silent. If "God is God" He has the prerogative to allow Satan in heaven and He can make it possible to have him kicked out permanently. We must accept this by faith. The important issue is the "why" question: Why Satan was kicked out is God has a "purpose" for Satan being on earth during the Great Tribulation, which is the focus of Chapter 13.
14. Verse 10 (again): 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 Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.
- a) One thing that puzzled me about this verse is "who's doing the talking?" This voice in heaven says "the accuser of our brothers". Whoever is talking is a "brother" to those being accused. Therefore, I believe this is a saved person, or the voice of lots of people together "cheering" as Satan is hurled to the earth.
  - b) The "cheering" here in heaven is because Satan and his demonic forces are not in heaven anymore. This praise is another aspect of "Jesus Second Coming is about to happen and we're getting to a point where the problem of sin is coming to an end."
  - c) The point is when we do get to heaven, we don't have to worry about the devil or any demonic forces being allowed there to "prosecute" us, ever again.
15. Verse 11: They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.
- a) In Verse 10, there is a "voice" in heaven speaking. The same voice is talking here.
  - b) The next question is who is "they"? This verse says "they" overcame him (presumably Satan) by the blood of the Lamb.
    - i) In other words, whoever "they" are, they are saved by believing in Jesus.
  - c) The answer to the "who is saved in this verse" question depends upon one's view of the Great Tribulation: If one believes the Great Tribulation is a single, future event, it refers to those who are saved during this event. Despite the persecution of demonic forces, these people did not deny their faith in Jesus, even to the point of being martyred.
    - i) If one believes The Great Tribulation covers all of Christian history, then it refers to everyone who declares their allegiance to Jesus, even to a point of death.

16. Verse 12: Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short."
- a) Verse 12 gives good news and bad news. It says in effect, "The good news is peace to those in heaven because Satan is no longer there. The bad news is to those who are on earth now have to deal with the guy". ☺
  - b) Notice that Satan is "filled with fury". Again, Satan understands God's game plan. I believe He has since the days of Adam and Eve. Satan didn't know was the timing and the details. I believe there was a war in heaven as Satan knew the time was getting near the end and therefore, he made one desperate attack to delay the inevitable.
    - i) Now that Satan is back on earth, He is even "more desperate" to delay his end.
    - ii) Ever see an animal get cornered? When they get desperate, they get more vicious to try to protect their life. Many commentators see an "insanity" to Satan during the time frame of the Great Tribulation, as he knows his time is short.
  - c) OK, John, all of this interesting. What does it have to do with my life? Remember my theme is about "Understating God's Game Plan". If the Great Tribulation is a future event, Satan still has access to heaven to make accusations against you and me. We too can overcome all the power of Satan if and only if we trust in the "blood of the Lamb".
    - i) James 4:7 says, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you".
  - d) This chapter tells of our ultimate end (in heaven) and Satan's ultimate end. During the rough times of our life remembering that no matter what, we are saved. God cares for us and we can get through whatever Satan or "life" throws our way with God's help.
  - e) Verse 12 has the word "woe". If you recall from the last few chapters, there were three "woes" predicted as part of God's judgment on earth. (Ref. Revelation 8:13).
    - i) After the first woe, the text said in effect, "One woe down two woes to go". (Rev. 9:12). After the second woe, the text said in effect, "One more to go" (Rev 11: 14).
    - ii) We are seeing the "third woe" here in Verse 12, with Satan coming to earth. The details of that "woe" are described in more detail in the next chapter.
17. Verse 13: When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child.
- a) This chapter opened with a "sign" of the woman who gave birth to a male child. The best interpretation of this sign is that the "woman" refers to the Nation of Israel. Here in Verse 13, we read that the dragon (i.e. Satan) focuses his attack on Israel.
  - b) OK, lets set the scene: We're now in the middle of the tribulation. Somehow, someway, Satan is kicked out of heaven. Now that Satan is earth based, He focuses His attack on the nation of Israel again. The big question is "why". Why pick on Israel? After, all Jesus is around and they have already fulfilled their main purpose in history.
    - i) The answer goes back to "Understanding God's Game Plan". Remember that God said that the Israelites would inherit the Promised Land. This is an unconditional promise given to Abraham (Genesis 12:7) and confirmed to his grandson Jacob. (Genesis 35:12). It is an unconditional promise.
    - ii) Given that promise, Satan understood that if he can wipe out the Jewish nation, "Satan wins". If there are no Jewish people "around", God cannot fulfill His promise to that nation. Therefore, Satan focuses his attack on the Jewish people.
  - c) Many pages ago in this lesson, I brought up the question, "Why was (and is) the Jewish nation persecuted "after" Jesus was born? What's the purpose? Now you know. If Satan can wipe out the Jewish race, God can't fulfill His promise to that nation! Now you understand the evil done in the Middle Ages when Jewish people who were killed in the name of Christianity. Now you understand the Holocaust by Nazi Germany. I'm positive there were demonic forces behind all of this trying to end the Jewish race.

- i) One of the most frightening predictions in the Old Testament I believe ties to this Great Tribulation: In the whole land (of Israel)," declares the LORD, "two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it.... They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'" (Zechariah 13:7 and 9 NIV, parentheses text added).
  - ii) The text says that one day, two out of three Israelites will die, but the rest will be saved. This is the group that inherits the Promised Land. Many believe this text is about the Nazi Holocaust itself as Israel became a nation after that time. As tragic as that was, I think this is a single future event that is worse than that time frame.
- 18. Verse 14: The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach.
  - a) If God is going to preserve the Nation of Israel, God must provide a way of escape for them. That is what Verse 14 is all about. Somehow, the nation of Israel is taken away to safety out of the serpent's (Satan's) reach.
  - b) The "how" is an interesting question: The text says, the woman (Israel) was "given two wings of a great eagle". If I were trying to describe people getting on jet airlines, using first century language, that might be how I would describe it.
  - c) The "where" question is also mentioned: The Israelites are taken to a "place prepared for her in the desert". The nearest desert wilderness just outside of Israel is in Jordan, and this goes back to the Petra-location theory mentioned earlier in this lesson.
  - d) Now I need to discuss the term, "time, times and half a time".
    - i) In the English language, nouns are either singular or plural. We have one noun or multiple nouns. In Hebrew grammar there is also a way of saying "exactly two of something, no more, no less." An English word equivalent is "both". It is like the old joke of "I'm having all of my friends over tonight, both of them". You know when I say "both", I mean exactly two, no more, no less.
    - ii) In this text, the word "times" means exactly two times, nor more no less. Verse 14 says, "(One) time, (two) times and (one)half a time". Adding that up, it comes out to three and one half "times". The word "time" is associated with a year. That means three and one half times is three and one half years. Yes, it's my favorite time frame in Revelation! ☺ This three and one half times refers to the three and one half year time frame that is tied to the Great Tribulation of Revelation.
  - e) Getting back to "God's Game Plan" what is happening is that during the second (final) half of the seven-year Great Tribulation, there is a great persecution against the Jewish people, and somehow, somehow, they flee to a desert location. Somehow, somehow, God does not allow Satan to get them there.
    - i) I always like to think, "Well, if I do have to live through this Great Tribulation period, I would move to Petra. It might be the only safe spot on earth!
  - f) I also want to take a deviation to show the consistency of how God works. One of the most famous bible verses to Christians is, "And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." (1st Corinthians 10:13 NIV).
    - i) The point is, turning times of Christian temptations, God always provides an escape route if we are willing to look for it. I will argue that same principal applies during the Great Tribulation for the Jewish Nation. These verses here in Revelation speak of God's escape route for the Jewish people.
- 19. Verse 15: Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. <sup>16</sup> But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.

- a) These two verses are describing Satan's method of attack to the Jewish nation that fled to safety. If the text is literal, he tries to "flood them out" of their location. Somehow, the ground absorbs the water and the flood is prevented.
  - b) It is possible this is less literal as well. Armies are often described as attacking like a water flood. The point of the text is Satan will not win. God made an unconditional promise to preserve the Jewish Nation, and His promises stand despite Satan's efforts.
20. Verse 17: Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring--those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.
- a) The key term in this verse is "the rest of her offspring. Remember the word "her" refers to the woman, who we have concluded is the Nation of Israel. Who is the rest of her (Israel's) offspring? Does it refer to everyone of Christian or Jewish decent? Does it refer to all Christians? Since Jesus "came" from the Jewish race, Christians from non-Jewish backgrounds can be thought of as "the rest of her offspring".
  - b) Whoever it is, it is not good news for those living on earth. The point is there is going to be lots of persecution by Satan during the Tribulation. The focus is on those who are saved. Why them? Remember Satan is trying to prevent the last "x" person from being saved. The more people Satan can kill, the more he can prevent this from happening. God allows all of this in order to motivate people to get saved. Unfortunately, it usually requires times of persecution in order to get people to turn to God.
  - c) Remember that a persecuted person is less likely to share their faith with another. That is Satan's motivation to go after the saved-people in the Great Tribulation. That is another reason the "promises" that all Godly Christians will face persecution in some form. (Ref.: 2nd Timothy 3:12).
21. On that happy note, we can wrap up this lesson. ☺ What's the conclusion of all of this?
- a) It is that God has a "game plan" to redeem mankind.
  - b) Read ahead to the end of Revelation: God wins. ☺
  - c) Despite Satan's best attempt to thwart God's plans, God wins.
  - d) Therefore, the question for us is, "Do you and I want to join the winning side?"
    - i) If you and I were to participate in a sporting event and God told us in advance who was going to win, wouldn't you want to be on the winning side? If that doesn't motivate us, nothing will.
  - e) My goal here is to get you and me to draw closer to God and participate in His Game Plan. Even if you forget the details of this chapter, know that God will win eventually.
  - f) Know that God wants to work through people to get others to draw closer to Him. That is how He gets us involved in His game plan.
  - g) What I want you to get out of this chapter is understanding all of "history" from God's perspective as a motivational tool to get involved with the program. God's plans will come happen whether or not we participate.
  - h) The joy of life is being part of that program and part of the winning team!
22. Much of this chapter focuses on the plan for the Jewish nation.
- a) The key is that God keeps His promises.
  - b) If God is going to keep His promises to the Jewish nation, despite Satan's best efforts to stop that plan, know that God's plans for you and I will happen, again, despite Satan's best efforts to stop or slow down that plans. God's promises to us are also unconditional. We have to trust in that, despite whatever is happening around us.
23. Let's pray: Father, It is easy to read of all of this destruction and not take it personally. Help us to remember you have a plan for our lives as well as a plan for the world's salvation. Help us to be a part of Your plan for our lives and Your plan for salvation. Give us the discernment of how to live so that You get the glory in all that we do. Help people's heart be opened to your truth and help us be a witnesses to those around us who haven't turned to You with their lives, We ask this in Jesus name. Amen.