

# **Week 8**

## **The Great Tribulation and the Spirit of God.**

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## Introduction

But when does all of this happen? We are content with the details of the events in heaven and the events on earth as future events happening at the same time, but then chapters like chapter 12 enter the dialogue and discerning time, place, and meaning make our heads spin. To come close to grasping the meaning of this chapter we must develop an understanding of

The figures

The events

The identified times

However, we must also learn a new concept in hermeneutics and that concept is literary logic, specifically, Hebrew literary logic.

We tend to think and write in Western or Hellenistic logic. Our thoughts flow in linear patterns from one to another. Each new idea expands on the previous idea and each idea is exclusive in its content.

Eastern or Hebrew logic is often equated with the spokes of a wheel. Each new argument does not expand the previous argument but the original argument. So, the first argument will expand one aspect of the original idea then the second will return to the original idea and expand another concept from it.

But John is writing in Greek. Yes, and he is writing to a Greek audience, but he is writing from his (a Jewish) perspective and writing of a predominantly Jewish event. Additionally, John's other writings tend to portray an eastern logic. These thoughts are important as we move forward to chapter 12.

## The Figures

**The Woman** – Reminiscent of Joseph's dream that his mother (the moon), father (clothed in the sun) and brothers (the crown of twelve stars) would bow to him. The woman represents Israel. This is verified by the birth of the child who would rule and is taken up to heaven.

**The Child** – Jesus Christ, the Seed of the Woman. His ruling with an iron scepter draws on the picture of Christ in Psalm 2. The dragon desires to destroy him, but his plan is foiled.

**The Dragon** – Satan. His seven heads and horns mirror the images of the Holy Spirit, yet his spirit is only evil and a façade of truth. The ten horns are the statement of his authority reflective of the horns on the beast in Daniel 7.

## The Events

**The fallen stars** - Most likely this is not an astronomical event. Other astronomical figures in the vision have a metaphoric significance. The woman has the moon under her feet and is robed in the sun. The 1/3 of the stars are most likely the angels of heaven and this text points to the toll taken on heaven by the fall of Satan.

**The birth** – The male child is the fulfillment of Gen 3:15. He is the Seed of the Woman. His birth represents the end of the power of the dragon, but his being snatched up to God identifies the gap between the birth, death, resurrection and subsequent destruction of the dragon.

**The flight to the desert** – A future event, the nation of Israel (probably a remnant) will find protection in a desert location where the minions of the dragon will not be able to assail it. This is a reminder that God brought Israel to the desert before to redeem them and will do so again. This is sometimes equated with the rock city of Petra – in present day Jordan, and used for a movie set in Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade – as a possible place of refuge.

**The war** – A conflict between the demons and the angels. The conflict is real, not a metaphor, since the name of the leader of the angelic host – Michael – is given to us in the text. The battle is heated and competitive, but finally the dragon is overcome and banished.

## The identified times

**1260 Days** – The equivalent of 42 30 day months or 3 ½ years. More importantly this is the same time frame is used in Daniel 12, but there the text speaks of 1290 days from the end of the sacrifice leaving us with 30 days of unaccounted time and the mention of 1335 days – an additional 2 ½ months – creates an interesting enigma. Let's try and solve it...

The 1260 days are defined as a time of refuge – vs. 6 says she would be taken care of by God for 1260 days. That time of refuge is more specific than the other two day statements

The 1290 are the time from the breaking of the covenant – Theoretically, it could take 30 days to mobilize a nation and the forces against a nation especially in the time of faux peace that precedes the flight.

The 1260 days are not the end of time because Rev. 12:17 says when frustrated by not being able to harm Israel the dragon turns his attention toward the righteous. There are then 45 days to the return of Christ and Armageddon. A total of 1335 days.

**Time, Times, and half a time.** The antichrist renews a covenant with Israel for one 7, or 7 years. Daniel tells us that in the middle of the 7 antichrist breaks his word with Israel. Half of 7 is three and a half years or time (1) + times (2) + and half a time (1/2) the math equals 3 ½ years.

## The Unidentified time

The signs “appear” – Significantly, John does not put a time frame on this vision. He does not say, for example; “then”, or “immediately,” or even “after this.” While this is an argument from silence it is also a marker that the material of the vision is not chronological. The purpose of this material is amplification and, to some extent, background. One of the common tools of John in the book of Revelation is to continuously draw us back to the OT and its prophecies, fulfilled and unfulfilled. It is in the OT that we get the background, meaning and significance of the book of Revelation. This vision lays out a historic and future vision that draws on Daniel and clarifies some of the heaven anchored events that go on outside of our sight. Using Hebrew logic the passage plays out in three expanding acts:

### Spoke 1: The Woman and the beast vv. 1-6 –

*Revelation 12:1-6 (NIV)*

*<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. <sup>3</sup>Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. <sup>4</sup>His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. 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. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>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.*

The most general of the acts, it lays out the characters and major events from beginning (Gen 3) to end. While Israel is the woman, in this act she is better viewed as the one who is the bearer of the “seed of the woman.” This act contains all of the major matters of the vision from beginning to end in general form.

### Spoke 2: The War in Heaven vv. 7-12 –

*Revelation 12:7-12 (NIV)*

<sup>7</sup> *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. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> 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.”*

Returning to the beginning and the fall of Satan and his angels. The significant matter here is that Satan was vanquished in heaven and on earth through the salvation that comes in Christ. “He will rule the nations with an iron scepter.” He no longer accuses the righteous but torments the faithless – a future aspect of the second spoke for the serpent has no power over the church in the GT.

**Spoke 3:** The Wrath of the Dragon vv.13-17 –

*Revelation 12:13-17 (NIV)*

<sup>13</sup> *When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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.*

Satan’s anger toward Israel is relentless. This verse alone encompasses the Holocaust and other anti-Israel movements throughout time and is the most specific of the three spokes. But the whole of Satan’s perversity comes to its zenith when he pursues Israel to the desert where God will rescue her. Her salvation is such that only God can save her and she must acknowledge His preservation of her in times of trouble.

