

# THREE BEINGS IN REVELATION 12

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Revelation chapter 12 begins the second half of that book, and also introduces an entirely new topic. The first 11 chapters have much emphasis on the general persecution of the church, with the ultimate preservation of the righteous by God, and His judgments against the wicked. We see these same general themes in the remainder of the book, but in much more specific detail. Details of the opposition to the church are given, as well as the details of the church's triumph, and the details of hell and heaven. Chapter 12 introduces three beings: a woman, a great red dragon, and a male child.

## **A woman with child**

In verses 1-2, "there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: and she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered." The woman obviously represents something from God, not something evil. First, having the sun for clothing and the moon under her feet is something glorious and powerful, in a good sense (compare Psa 104:2; Matt 13:43; 17:2; Acts 26:13; Rev 1:16; 10:1; 21:23; 22:5). Second, the crown of twelve stars is also a good symbol. In the book of Revelation, the crown is associated with victory or authority (Rev 2:10; 3:11; 4:4,10; 6:2; 14:14; 19:12). The stars are symbolic of something directly under God's authority (Rev 1:16,20; 2:1,28; 3:1; 8:10-11; 9:1). Also, the number twelve (or twelve squared) is consistently connected to God's people (and their reward) in the book of Revelation (Rev 7:4-8; 14:1-4; 21:12-21; 22:2). Therefore, a crown of twelve stars could be associated in some way with God's faithful servants. Third, Satan sought to devour the woman's child (Rev 12:4), then persecuted the woman and her seed (Rev 12:13,15,17), and God actively protected the woman (Rev 12:6,13-16). The woman unquestionably represents something that is very good and extremely precious to God. What she might represent (and definitely does not represent) is considered below.

## **The red dragon**

In verses 3-4, "there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born." The fact that the dragon attempted to devour the child shows that he is an evil being. Revelation 12:9 specifically identifies the "great dragon" as "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan." The depiction of the dragon with seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns on his heads illustrates his complete wickedness and the power he has to exercise it. The seven heads with their crowns fittingly symbolize Satan's authority as the "prince of this world"

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(continued)

(Job 1:7; 2:2; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2; 6:12; 1 Pet 5:8). Horns signify power (Dan 7-8; Zech 1:18-21; Luke 1:69; Rev 5:6; 13:1,11; 17:3-16), and the ten horns fittingly depict Satan's power over his kingdom, including all the wicked (Matt 4:8-9; 12:26; Luke 4:5-6; 11:18; Acts 26:18; 2 Tim 2:26; Heb 2:14). His tail drawing the third part of the stars of heaven and casting them to earth also demonstrates this power.

## **The man child to rule all nations**

In verse two, the woman was with child and ready to deliver. In verse four, the dragon (Satan) stood before the woman so he could "devour her child as soon as it was born." In verse five, the woman "brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne." The male child may represent Christ. First of all, he is described as one who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron (Rev 12:5). In the scriptures, this is an exact description of the position and authority given to Jesus Christ (Psa 2:6-9; 110:1-7; Rev 2:26-27; 19:11-16). Furthermore, this child was caught up to God and to his throne, another description which fits Christ (Dan 7:13-14; Acts 2:29-36; Heb 8:1; 12:2; Rev 3:21). If the "man child" is indeed Christ, then who is the woman?

## **Who is the woman?**

Roman Catholics say that this woman is Mary, the earthly mother of Christ, but the context of this chapter does not support such a view. First, there is no evidence of Mary personally being under the degree of persecution by Satan as this chapter describes (Rev 12:13-17), or her fleeing into the wilderness (Rev 12:6). Second, there is no evidence of Mary being the recipient of the kind of divine protection as this chapter describes (Rev 12:6,14-16). Third, the woman's "seed" are the ones who "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 12:17). Christians are the seed of the woman. Mary is neither the physical nor the spiritual mother of Christians. Some believe the woman represents the church. But the church did not beget Jesus, rather Jesus established the church (Matt 16:18-19). Also, Christians are the *seed* of the woman (Rev 12:17). This indicates that the woman may represent all of God's people in general, both from the Old and New Testaments. This fits, because, first of all, Jesus was born of God's people Israel (Matt 2:6; Luke 1:68-75; 2:25-34; John 1:11; Acts 3:25-26; 13:22-23; Heb 7:14). Second, the woman fleeing into the wilderness because of persecution from the devil (Rev 12:6) is certainly a description in keeping with the woman being God's people. Satan's persecution of her seed further is also consistent with what he does to God's people in his efforts to devour them (1 Pet 5:8).