
CHOOSE YOU THIS DAY

LESSON 21: THE KING TAKES THE THRONE (REVELATION 8-12)

Objectives

- Become familiar with a bird's-eye view of Revelation 8-13.
- Continue to use the Old Testament to interpret the New.
- Recognize Revelation 12-13 as an interlude in the narrative.

Review

In the last lesson, we looked at Revelation 1-7:

- In chapter 1, John introduces his letter, which will circulate among the seven churches of Asia. Then he sees a vision of Jesus and is told to write everything down.
- Jesus has specific things to say to each of the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3, including both admonishments and promises.
- John's vision shifts in chapter 4 to the throne room of Heaven, where God is worshiped as Creator.
- In chapter 5, the slain Lamb appears and begins to be worshiped as Redeemer.
- In chapter 6, the seals of a scroll begin to be opened. Things begin to happen on Earth, including domination, war, economic imbalance, death, and martyrdom. I suggested that these things need not wait until the Tribulation to be fulfilled, but could be considered to span the Church Age, increasing in frequency and intensity like the birth pains Jesus talked about. I showed reasons the sixth Seal could be considered the onset of the Day of the Lord and is likely to begin with the Rapture and coincide with the Gog-Magog war of Ezekiel 38-39.
- As soon as the Church is removed from the Earth, we see in chapter 7 that new representatives for God are chosen (144,000 Israelites), and then we get a glimpse of how this all looks from the perspective of Heaven as we witness the gathered Church praising God for salvation.

Revelation 8

An Interlude of Silence

Revelation 8 opens with a half hour of silence in Heaven as the seventh Seal is opened. The reality of this time period is likely to be longer than thirty minutes. Often before God passes judgment there is an indication of silence.¹

Cleansing Ritual

The ceremony the angels perform in **Revelation 8:3-5** closely resembles the Day of Atonement ceremony:

And he shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the Lord, and two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small, and he shall bring it inside the veil and put the incense on the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is over the testimony, so that he does not die... Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it over the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat. Leviticus 16:12-15

Compare:

And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake. Revelation 8:3-5

The prayers of the saints are being offered up to God, then hurled upon the earth. Just as the incense was offered to initiate the cleansing of the Temple so God could dwell there, this "prayer incense" is being offered to initiate the cleansing of the Earth so that God can dwell there. Remember that the Earth itself has been defiled by the murder of the innocents, among other things, and their blood needs to be avenged.

The First Four Trumpets

The avenging begins immediately. The first four Trumpets seem to come in a group (like the four horsemen of the Seals do), and they appear to follow in close succession.

- First: hail and fire mixed with blood
- Second: a great mountain is thrown in the sea, which becomes "blood"
- Third: "Wormwood" falls into the fresh waters of the earth
- Fourth: a third of the heavenly lights are darkened

¹ See the Supplemental Notes for lesson 21.

We can't cover every detail, but I'll give a few thoughts, based on the assumption that there will be a largely literal sequence of fulfillment:

- All four scenarios could be carried out by space objects affecting the earth.
- Two of these four judgments involve something like blood.
- The description of the ending of the Gog-Magog war involves hail, fire, and sulfur from heaven, and I think that the **first Trumpet** is likely to coincide with that moment. In that case, the blood could indicate all the warriors that will die that day, not literal blood falling from the sky.
- There is so much hail and fire coming from the sky that a third of the vegetation is burned up. If a barrage of small meteors were to arrive in a cluster, they would all hit the same "side" of the globe, which could easily equal a third of the total land mass.
- With the sounding of the **second Trumpet**, when the "great mountain" is thrown into the sea, it says a third of the sea becomes blood. But I don't think this is actual blood, since later in the Bowl judgments the sea is again said to turn to blood, but that time it will be "like the blood of a corpse." This first time, I expect it's a blood-like appearance from the composition of what looks like a huge asteroid. If a mountain-sized iron-containing asteroid were to hit somewhere in the Mediterranean Sea, it could easily destroy a third of the ships and send its red color to a third of the water.² God's judgments on the earth at this time are in part to avenge the earth for the blood of the innocent, so it's interesting that we begin to see events related to blood.
- We aren't told how localized the effects of the **third Trumpet** may be, when something comes down from the sky and contaminates a third of the fresh water. The idea of poisoning the drinking water shows up several times in the Old Testament when God is calling people to repent of their idolatry.

And the Lord says: "Because they have forsaken my law that I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice or walked in accord with it, but have stubbornly followed their own hearts and have gone after the Baals, as their fathers taught them. Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will feed this people with bitter food, and give them poisonous water to drink. Jeremiah 9:13-15

- With the **fourth Trumpet**, things go dark. It's unlikely that a third of the stars would actually be removed from the sky, let alone a third of the actual sun and a third of the moon, so I would suspect that John's description would be from the perspective of Earth looking up. Some surmise that this is describing an "asteroid winter," in which a massive bands of dust clouds are raised from the previous impacts and thus block the heavenly lights when they ought to be shining. Others believe this judgment should be interpreted spiritually (so that we're talking about things happening with angels in the spiritual realm, for example).

Attempting to determine the natural means by which God may carry out His judgments does

² It's true that John did not specify which sea the mountain hits, but the Mediterranean would have been the one familiar to him. Besides, an asteroid hitting an ocean would not be likely to affect a third of it or a third of the ships.

not in any way negate the supernatural nature of these events. His genius and power are enhanced, in my opinion, when I consider that He placed all of these elements in space so that they would carry out His will at just the right time. Of course, He could just call all of this into being out of nothing if He wants, but He doesn't always do things that way. And once again, there's always the danger of over-literalizing apocalyptic literature! If these things are meant to be figurative, we simply won't know until afterwards what it all stood for. In any case, the descriptions must have meant something to the original audience.

We aren't told how long any of these conditions last if they're literal. The first two are one-time events with lasting damage, but we don't know how long the water will be poisoned or how long the light visibility will be reduced.

After the first four Trumpets, an eagle³ flies by and says that the coming things are worse than the ones that have just happened.

Revelation 9

The Fifth Trumpet

The **fifth Trumpet** involves creatures coming out of the abyss. They are released by something resembling a star falling on the earth. We know it can't be an actual star, which would obviously be larger than the earth itself and burn it up. The Greek word for "heaven" also means "sky," so this could allow for it to be either a spirit-being who is cast to earth and has authority to open the abyss, or an actual physical object that creates a deep crack in the earth and lets things out. Those are the two most common interpretations.

Frankly, I have seen dozens of different postulations about what the "key to the bottomless pit" may be, who this entity is that is given the key, and what these creatures are (ranging from actual physical creatures to some kind of visible demon to John's attempt to describe futuristic helicopters). It's just such a strange description that I'm content to wait and see.

Whatever they are, the torment from these creatures lasts for five months. It's the first clear statement of the duration of a plague that we've seen yet. I find it curious that the people of earth seek death but are unable to die during this time period. If you have older kids or teens you know there is currently an obsession with zombies in our culture.⁴ I can't help but compare my mental image of people who are trying to kill themselves (sustaining horrible injuries but unable to die) with what I see in the various portrayals of zombies with bloody wounds and vacant stares.

³ Some translations say "angel" instead of "eagle," so I'm not inclined to try to attach some special symbolism to an eagle here.

⁴ Even the CDC uses the zombie theme to get attention for their preparedness messages: <http://www.cdc.gov/phpr/zombies.htm>.

The Sixth Trumpet

The **sixth Trumpet** involves a third of mankind being killed upon the release of four angels who have been bound in a specific place on earth: the Euphrates River. This river marks the eastern boundary of the land promised to Abraham (**Genesis 15:18**). The idea is that to the west is God's Land and to the east is "Babylon," or enemy territory.

There are two hundred million individuals in their army and they ride unnatural horses. Again, the sheer number of opinions on what exactly this scene might look like is so vast that I'm not even interested in jumping into the fray. I do think this is where much of Joel's prophecy about the Day of the Lord fits in. Here is an excerpt:

Fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of Eden before them, but behind them a desolate wilderness, and nothing escapes them. Their appearance is like the appearance of horses, and like war horses they run. As with the rumbling of chariots, they leap on the tops of the mountains, like the crackling of a flame of fire devouring the stubble, like a powerful army drawn up for battle. Before them peoples are in anguish; all faces grow pale. Like warriors they charge; like soldiers they scale the wall. They march each on his way; they do not swerve from their paths. They do not jostle one another; each marches in his path; they burst through the weapons and are not halted. They leap upon the city, they run upon the walls, they climb up into the houses, they enter through the windows like a thief. Joel 2:3-9

One third of mankind is killed as a direct result of the fire, smoke, and sulfur coming from the mouths of the horses. However, John makes a point to tell us at the end of chapter 9 that the rest of mankind continues with their evil. He gets very specific about what that evil entails: idolatry, murder, sorcery, sexual immorality, and theft.

Revelation 10

John has been recording everything he has seen, but he's not supposed to tell about the "seven thunders" that he hears. It's possible that these seven thunders are another set of judgments, like the Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls, but we are not given the descriptions ahead of time.

Here, John encounters a very powerful spirit-being, who is demonstrating authority over both the Gentile nations and the Israelite nation by having one foot on the sea and one foot on the land. See the supplemental notes for why this cannot be Jesus.

John is told to eat the little scroll. Ezekiel had a similar experience in which he was told to eat a little scroll:

And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. And he spread it before me. And it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe. And he said to me, "Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." So I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat. And he said to me, "Son of

man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it.” Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey. Ezekiel 2:9–3:3 ESV

Eating the scroll is a picture of being ready to prophesy God’s message. Both John and Ezekiel describe the scroll as being sweet-tasting. The bitterness John experiences comes because of the judgments that are now imminent. John’s prophecies are now to extend to many peoples and nations and languages and kings (verse 11).

Notice verse 7:

But that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets. Revelation 10:7

We’ve seen the results of the first six Trumpets, but the seventh has not yet been sounded. This angel is giving us a heads-up that something special and long-anticipated is going to happen when the seventh angel blows the Trumpet. It will be something important that the prophets foretold.

Revelation 11

Two Witnesses

First, though, we come to a section about the Two Witnesses. It says in verse 3 that they will be on the scene for 1,260 days (three and a half years), which leads to a lot of discussion about where this fits among the rest of Revelation’s events.

When I scrapbook, I put my pictures into chronological order as much as possible, but sometimes there are topics that span a longer duration and overlap other events. Think of how a remodeling project may be going on over Christmas a couple of family birthdays, and a trip you took.

I think that’s what’s happening with the Two Witnesses. Their ministry spans a time period in which some of the other things are happening that we’ve already talked about, but it seems to end just before the seventh Trumpet (that really important event we’ve been told to pay attention to). As much as it would have been nice to know exactly what these guys were doing during the scorpion-creature infestation of the fifth Trumpet, for example, it would have broken up the storytelling to keep mentioning them.

Most people who teach Revelation with a largely literal approach try to determine whether the Two Witnesses come during the first half of the Tribulation or the second half. I would put them in the first half, although I'm not sure it has to exactly line up with either one.⁵

Notice:

- These two men draw the attention of the whole world by causing drought and plagues as they serve as God's prophets. We've already seen that lots of terrifying and destructive things have been happening on the earth, so add drought and plagues in Israel to the list of supernatural things going on.
- When the witnesses are raised from the dead, there is a massive earthquake.

Their Identities

Those who support the amillennial or postmillennial positions tend to interpret this section symbolically, often suggesting that the Two Witnesses are Israel and the Church.

Premillennialists commonly propose that they are two men from the past. Enoch and Elijah are favorite candidates because they were raptured and did not die, so the idea is that God sort of set these two aside for the purpose of using them later on in history. Others believe the Witnesses are Moses and Elijah, because the things they are doing very much resemble the things Moses and Elijah did (plagues, drought, prophesying, etc.).

I don't have a solid opinion about whether they are people from the past or not, but I see a strong connection to Joshua and Zerubbabel of the post-exilic period. Revelation 11:4 directly states that these two witnesses are the two olive trees and the two lampstands without explaining what that means, so we naturally must go back to the Old Testament to see what it's referring to. There we find striking, yet puzzling connections to these two figures in Israel's history. You can read more about that in the Supplemental Notes.

The identity of the Two Witnesses is not a critical factor in understanding end-times prophecy, but it can certainly open the door to some interesting pathways of study!

The Seventh Trumpet

After the Two Witnesses are raised from the dead, it's time for the seventh Trumpet. Back in **Revelation 10:7**, an angel declared that at the time of the seventh Trumpet, the mystery of God would be fulfilled. We know that this "mystery of God" language is directly related to the Church as the bringing of Jew and Gentile into one Body and the place where God dwells

⁵ As an aside, I don't really talk much about the Abomination of Desolation because I'm just not sure that it marks the midpoint of the Tribulation, as is commonly taught. I think Daniel 9:27 certainly opens the door for this explanation, so I'm not discounting it. It's another one of those passages that I've seen parsed in so many different ways, with differences of opinion about whether this even still has a future fulfillment. I think it probably does, but it's interesting that we don't find the Abomination of Desolation showing up in Revelation—a book that in many ways helps us put some Old Testament prophecies in order. Related to this issue is the matter of when to start counting the days of the Tribulation. Does it start with the sixth Seal or a with covenant between the antichrist or something else? I get a little weary of people claiming to be certain of these things.

(**Ephesians 3:6, Colossians 1:24-27**). Something really big is happening here on the heels of the arrival of the Two Witnesses in heaven.

Either these figures somehow complete the Church, or perhaps they are called “witnesses” instead of “prophets” because they bear witness to the consummation of the marriage between Christ and the Church. Jewish marriages had one or more witnesses who waited outside the bridal chamber for the groom’s announcement that the marriage had been consummated. Furthermore, in the ancient Jewish wedding tradition, the groom and bride are called the “king and queen.”

This could help to explain the really big announcement that is made next:

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” Revelation 11:15

If people have been joining His Bride from every tribe, tongue, language, and nation up to this time and then He is made one with them through the consummation of the marriage, this could be how the nations now belong to Him finally and completely, not just legally!

No matter what, it’s clear that we are seeing the critical point at which God asserts His rightful ownership over the whole earth. In **Psalm 82:8**, we learned that God will inherit *a//* the nations one day, after disinheriting them at the time of the Tower of Babel. We know that Christ won the victory at the cross, but like a person who purchases a home, the day they hold the title deed is not the same as the day they take full possession and move in. I think the seventh Trumpet means that God is moving in! I love this, especially in light of all that we have learned in relation to the members of God’s spiritual family being allotted the nations of the world (**Deuteronomy 32:8**). A song breaks out in heaven:

We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth. Revelation 11:17-18

Once again we find all the heavenly beings worshipping God for a great change that has happened. Not only is He Creator and Redeemer, but now their praise involves the “taking up” of His great power to reign, judge, and reward. All of this is followed by a dramatic opening of the temple in heaven in which the ark of His covenant is seen. I do not think this means that the physical ark of antiquity is suddenly discovered, as some claim. I believe it means that God is remembering His covenant relationship with Israel and is demonstrating that His presence is with the remnant to protect them as the Bowl judgments are poured out. There are other valid and meaningful ideas about this passage.

Revelation 12

A Change of View

Many scholars believe that **Revelation 12 and 13** are an interlude, or parenthesis, in the chronology. If you remove chapters 12 and 13, you can connect the end of chapter 11 (in which Jesus gets His Kingdom back) to the beginning of chapter 14, in which we find Him standing on Mount Zion with the 144,000.

The main differences in interpretation come when we try to determine which time period chapters 12 and 13 cover, and whether those two chapters are even chronological within themselves. I personally see this as another “scrapbooking” instance, in which the material covered in these two chapters is a different angle on the events beginning in chapter 6 and concluding in 17 or 18. It’s as if I scrapbooked all the pictures for my immediate family in a certain year, but then I wanted to tell about what my extended family had been doing, which intersected a bit with the things I had already talked about. This alternate view doesn’t really go before or after the other, so it appears here in the middle even though it extends both backward and forward in time. It’s my best understanding of why it’s placed here!

The Sign in Heaven

I do not believe that the first section of chapter 12 is about the ancient past.

And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days. Revelation 12:1-6

While you’ll often hear that this describes Satan taking a third of the angels with him to become his servants, at which point they supposedly became demons, we have no biblical record that there even was such a rebellion among the angels, nor is there any reason to flashback to pre-history at this point. Obviously, some angels are rebellious against God, but we have already learned that fallen angels are not the same as demons. We simply don’t have the back story in the Bible about what happened in pre-history.

This sign that John sees could refer to a literal alignment of astronomical bodies centered around the constellation Virgo.

When an ancient Hebrew person was told to think of the sun, moon, stars, and a woman, they would have thought of Virgo (which they believed represented the nation of Israel). Every September near Rosh Hashanah, the sun appears in the center of Virgo and the moon appears below her feet. Some scholars have used detailed astronomy programs to determine

that everything lined up exactly as described here (along with several other interesting details) on September 11 of 3 B.C., which would be a strong indication that this was the time of the birth of Christ.⁶ Kings were crowned at this time of year, so they would have had the mental association with this alignment and the coming of a king.⁷ We have lost this story in modern times, largely because of the satanic development of astrology, which deliberately drew the attention to the individual human instead of to God.

Unlike those who believe Revelation 12 is something that happened in pre-history, I believe it is either referring to the time of the birth of Christ or else it is yet unfulfilled—and I lean toward it being both.⁸

Several mythologies of the world include tales of a planetary body coming into our solar system periodically—one that they associate with a red dragon.

It is often called by other names, such as Nibiru, or Nemesis. Or it may be called the “winged planet,” just as a dragon has wings. It is almost always associated with the color red, just like the dragon here in **Revelation 12**. This planet is known as the “Destroyer” in the mythologies. It drags a tail of debris behind it. We find this red dragon in **Revelation 12** flinging things (“stars”) to the earth, which is exactly how the first four Trumpet judgments appear to manifest. The seven heads and ten horns could indicate satellites of the planet.

It’s good for us to be aware of these connections to the dragon for three reasons:

- First, I find it interesting that these ancient mythologies and their New Age spin-offs frequently claim that evil extraterrestrial entities will be coming in the wake of this celestial body. If God’s enemies claim that *their* enemies are coming when this body passes through our solar system, one must wonder if it’s really God that uses such a thing as the agent of His judgment!
- The second reason to bring it up is simply in case such a thing ever becomes evident in reality. We would know at that point that this was prophesied and we would not have to be afraid of all the hype.
- A third reason to mention it is because this is another one of those topics that you are likely to stumble upon if you begin to search out prophetic topics online and I want to warn you that at this point it is impossible to sort out deception from truth (if there is actually any truth about it being told). My own opinion is that it could possibly be related to the red dragon of **Revelation 12** and the events of the first four Trumpets, but you should not believe reports of sightings or even supposed photos of it at this point. Most of the presentations associated with Nibiru or Nemesis are full of New Age or occult messages. And most legitimate astronomers would say its absolutely

⁶ See “Revelation 12, Astral Prophecy, and the Birth of Christ on 911:” *Plowsharebeater*, 4 August 2012, YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O44nNzRa81Q> More sources are listed for this topic in the “Signs of the Times” lesson.

⁷ Brettler, Marc. “God’s Coronation on Rosh Hashanah: What Kind of King?” *The Torah* website. <http://thetorah.com/coronation-on-rosh-hashanah-what-kind-of-king/>

⁸ As interesting as the possibility is that it could happen again in the future, I don’t have a certain video or article to recommend, since I don’t want to endorse or put forward particular future dates that may be mentioned in such videos.

ridiculous that we could ever be surprised by such a large body coming into our solar system that we don't already know about.

Although the dragon could have an astronomical counterpart like a planetary body or the constellation Draco, we can't stop there. We must acknowledge, first of all, that stars can represent angels in the Bible, and we know this is true elsewhere in Revelation (1:20). Even though I don't see other evidence in the Bible that Satan claimed a third of the angels in prehistory and brought them to Earth, that doesn't mean it won't happen in the future. We will soon see that Satan and his angels will indeed be cast down to earth (12:9), so this could very well be speaking of that same event. There can be no doubt that this dragon symbolically represents the devil (even if there's an additional astronomical fulfillment) since later on in the chapter a direct connection is made between Satan and the dragon (12:9).

So the summary is that I think the dragon taking a third of the stars is either an astronomical event in the future or Satan and his angels being cast from heaven, or both.

The Woman and Her Child

The woman must be more than an astronomical timing clue, too, because the scene changes from a "great sign in heaven" to the woman giving birth to her child and then fleeing to the wilderness. Apocalyptic literature is like this in the way the symbols can shift around. There can be little doubt that the woman represents Israel—the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The child is clearly associated with Jesus, since he is ruling the nations with a rod of iron. This is a direct reference to **Psalm 2**.

I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Psalm 2:7-9

I had always been confused by the explanation that it is Jesus, though, because it doesn't exactly fit. Some who interpret it this way liken the fact that the child is "caught up to God" with the time Jesus was taken to Egypt by His parents to escape Herod. That just doesn't match the specificity of being caught up to God "and to his throne." Others say this is the ascension, which makes more sense because at least both go UP. But the whole idea we get from this incident in 12:5 is that the child escapes the attempt of the dragon on his life and is taken to a place of safety. This seems a lot different from being killed (Jesus did *not* escape from the dragon!) and later raised and ascended. The other inconsistency in my mind was that it seems to be a future event because it's so specific about how long the woman (Israel) is protected and there isn't a historical 1,260 day (or even 1,260 year) period that might account for this. The earlier letter to Thyatira contains something interesting:

The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. Revelation 2:26-27

This is talking about people in the church who will rule with Christ! BOTH use the "rod of iron" terminology.

Because Paul gives us a very clear metaphor of the Church as a human body, and specifies that Christ is the head of the Church, I propose that this child that has been “born of Israel” (because the Church came out of Judaism) is the corporate Christ and the Church. It even fits the natural birth process, with the head of the child coming first before the rest of the body.

Consider that possibility as we read the next two verses.

**She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.
Revelation 12:5-6**

We see that God takes the child up to heaven as soon as it is born.

The Greek word used here for “caught up” is *harpazo*, which carries the idea of snatching away by force. It’s the same word Paul used in **2 Corinthians 12:4** to describe his vision of heaven and in **1 Thessalonians 4:17** to tell of how we will be “caught up together with him in the clouds.” We usually think of the Church being born in Acts when it got started, but maybe Acts is better likened to its conception—when it began to come together and be formed. This would mean that we are looking at the Rapture here in **verse 5**. The Church is completed or “born” as the fullness of the Gentiles has come in (**Romans 11:25**).⁹

The idea of it being the Rapture here perfectly leads into what happens next, which is the protection of the Israelite people for three and a half years. We see another reference to the woman’s flight later on in **verse 13**, which gives the further information that Satan pursues her but she is given a supernatural ability to get away.

In between those two mentions of the woman’s flight, we are given a glimpse at what is going on in the invisible realm.

I believe that this section from **verses 7 to 12** fits right in between **verses 5 and 6**. Some time (even a few years) may pass between the Rapture and the fleeing of Israel to her place of protection. Meanwhile, in heaven...

Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the

⁹ Most commentators do not mention this possibility. If they do, they often dismiss it without reckoning with the data involved. For an article that seeks where the Rapture is found in Revelation and concludes that this is the most likely place based on the man-child as the unified Christ and Church, see “The Apocalypse of John and a Reevaluation of the Rapture” by Michael J. Svingel, professor at Dallas Seminary: https://bible.org/article/apocalypse-john-and-rapture-church-reevaluation#P227_86264

Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!” Revelation 12:7-12

There is a war in heaven between the higher angels and the dragon, who is clearly identified with Satan in verse 9.

A war usually consists of many battles, so we should consider that this war is not won instantaneously. (Don't be alarmed by this, as if God *needed* lots of time to overcome Satan. We know He uses His created beings in His work, and we also know that He could have ended the whole global battle for the souls of men a long time ago, yet He has reasons for allowing it to be a process.) I think the best explanation is that this war is happening in the heavenly/spiritual dimension as the Two Witnesses are completing their task on earth. In that case, it would cover the whole time period of the Trumpet judgments, since it is at the sounding of the seventh Trumpet that the Kingdom is declared to belong to God again. The battle is clearly over at that point.

This war concludes with the same announcement that God is back in authority.

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come...” Revelation 12:10

It seems to match up with the seventh Trumpet event we saw earlier. Look at that wording:

The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever. Revelation 11:15

I think the war in heaven is the official means by which God takes back the authority He had once assigned to His *elohim* agents back at the Tower of Babel.

We're not told very much about the war or how it is waged, but we can see from **verse 8** that there was no longer any place for the dragon and his angels in heaven. The ESV makes it look like this is as a result of the dragon's defeat, but other translations don't make it cause/effect.

...but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. Revelation 12:8 (ESV)

“and they did not prevail, *nor* was their place found any more in the heaven.” Revelation 12:8 (Young's Literal Translation)

I suggest that the war started, at least in part, *because* there was no place for the dragon in heaven. We know from the account of Job that Satan was able to go before the Lord's throne and accuse people, and it confirms that here in **12:10** when it says he has been accusing the brethren before God day and night. The Church has been raptured and has taken over this spot before God's throne so Satan can't stand there anymore!

I see a dramatic paradigm shift here in the spiritual realm as the Church is caught up to God, and Satan is not only kicked out of his spot, but he eventually loses the war and is completely cast down to earth.

And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. Revelation 12:9

Here is our Old Testament connection.

The earth is utterly broken, the earth is split apart, the earth is violently shaken. The earth staggers like a drunken man; it sways like a hut; its transgression lies heavy upon it, and it falls, and will not rise again. On that day the Lord will punish the host of heaven, in heaven, and the kings of the earth, on the earth. They will be gathered together as prisoners in a pit; they will be shut up in a prison, and after many days they will be punished. Then the moon will be confounded and the sun ashamed, for the Lord of hosts reigns on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and his glory will be before his elders. Isaiah 24:19-23

Satan is obviously deeply angered about losing his status as “prince of the power of the air” and “accuser of the brothers,” so he goes after the people of God. Two groups are mentioned: the woman (who we have identified as Israel) and her offspring (who are identified in 12:17 as those who believe in Christ and keep God’s commandments, which we would call “tribulation believers”).

Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. Revelation 12:17

I’ve been skipping around within Revelation 12, so here’s a chart that shows where I think the passages overlap with others:

Overview of Brenda’s take on Revelation 12

Verse(s)	Event
12:1-4	Astronomical line-up coincides with the end of the “birth-pangs” period and the enemy’s own end-times schemes
12:5	Rapture of Church (heavenly perspective seen in Revelation 7:9-17)
12:6	Israel flees to the wilderness (expanded on in 12:13-14)
12:7-9	War in heaven (encompasses 3.5 years of Two Witnesses, Trumpets 1-6) Chronologically fits in between Revelation 12:5 and 6.
12:10-12	Seventh Trumpet – God wins and takes His kingdom back (same event as Revelation 11:15-18)
12:13-14	Israel is taken to a place of protection (expansion of v.6)
12:15-17	Leads into Beast Kingdom, persecution

