

THE CENTRAL CHARACTERS IN THE GREAT TRIBULATION

REVELATION 12:01–05

Introduction

This is one of the most revealing and fascinating chapters in the entire Bible. It rolls back the curtain between earth and heaven and shows what lies behind all the sin and evil and all the conflict and struggle of this world. It reveals a great *spiritual struggle* occurring behind the scenes of this world. And in the last days that spiritual struggle will be more intense than ever. The conflict will be so intense that the struggle waged upon earth is called by our Lord the *great tribulation*. By *great* He meant the most intense and terrible tribulation the world has ever seen. But why does the world suffer tribulation? Why does there have to be tribulation upon earth? And why will there be such intense and terrible tribulation in the end time? This passage tells us: it shows us the great *spiritual warfare* that is waged behind the scenes of this world, the great spiritual warfare that is being fought for the souls of men. There are three principle characters who have been involved in the spiritual warfare. These characters are the subject of this first passage.

- I. The first character: a woman with child (vv. 1-2).
- II. The second character: a great red dragon — Satan (vv. 3-4).
- III. The main character: a man child — Jesus (v. 5).

I. Revelation 12:01–02 Israel

There is the first character in the great tribulation — a woman with child. Note how the woman bursts upon the scene. She is said to be a “wondrous sign” or “wonder” (*semeion*). Note also that she is in heaven. This means that she is the heavenly representative of some earthly people. Who is the woman on earth, what people does she represent?

1. This woman is not identified, but it is clear who she is.
 - a. She is clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her. This refers back to the Old Testament to a dream that Joseph had:

Gen 37:9-11 *Then he 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.” When he told his father 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?” His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.*

Note that Jacob understood exactly what Joseph meant: the sun represented the father Jacob, the moon the mother, and the twelve stars the brothers. The dream was

a picture of Israel; Joseph was dreaming that Israel would be saved from destruction through him.

- b. She is pregnant and the child is pictured as being born (v. 2, 5). Note what is said about the child.

Rev 12:5 She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.

This clearly refers to Jesus Christ. He and He alone was born to rule all nations (cp. Psa. 2:9), and He alone was exalted to the throne of God. As stated, this is a clear reference to Jesus Christ.

- 2. Now who is this woman? There are three main positions as to who she is.
 - a. Some say she is Mary, the mother of Jesus. But there are just too many supernatural things said about this woman for her to be an earthly or human being.
 - b. Some say she is the church. But this is difficult to see, for the church did not give birth to Christ. On the contrary, Christ gave birth to the church.
 - c. Some say she is the ideal Zion, the ideal Jerusalem, the ideal Israel, the chosen people, the community of God from which Christ came. These say the mother represents all the true people of God, those before Jesus came and those after He came. Paul actually speaks of the Jerusalem which is above, who is the mother of the people of God on earth (Gal. 4:26). This position is a possible identification of the woman. But again, this position does not fill all the things said about the woman, not as well as Israel itself does.
 - d. Some say that the woman represents Israel, the very people who gave birth to Jesus Christ. This seems to be the clearest identification of the woman. As we progress through the passage, we will see that everything said about this woman fits Israel just like a glove.

=> Paul himself said that Jesus Christ came out of Israel (Rom. 9:5).

=> Isaiah prophesied that Israel would have labour pains and bring forth a male child (Isa. 66:7-8).

II. Revelation 12:03–04 Satan – Dragon

There is the second character in the great tribulation — an enormous dragon, that is, the devil. Note that the dragon is also said to be a sign in heaven. Three significant things need to be discussed about this sign.

- 1. There is the description and authority of the dragon or devil. The description is entirely different from what most people think. When people think of the devil, they picture a fiery red serpent-like creature with two horns and a long pointed tail who

holds a pitchfork in his hand. But this is a total misconception, a far cry from the truth. When Scripture speaks of Satan as a dragon, it is referring to the evil work he does, not to his looks or appearance. Scripture says that Satan is the highest and most glorious being ever created by God, that his being is so magnificent that he shines like the sun and actually possesses glory just like God. Note what this verse says about his description, and remember: this is not picturing what he looks like. It is describing his authority and power.

=> Satan has seven heads: seven is the number of completeness and fullness. Satan is complete in intelligence; he has full knowledge. He is not omniscient, of course, but his knowledge is complete and full.

=> Satan has seven crowns: this symbolizes authority, rule and dominion — a crowned ruler who has a kingdom that he rules over. Scripture clearly says that Satan is a crowned ruler and that his authority is well beyond anything that man ever thinks.

=> Satan has ten horns: this symbolizes great power, but power that pierces, rips and tears — all in the most ferocious and vicious way. It symbolizes that he uses his head and authority in an evil way.

=> Satan is the god of this world who blinds men's minds.

2 Cor 4:4 *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

=> Satan is the prince of this world.

John 12:31 *“Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.”*

John 14:30 *“I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me.”*

John 16:11 *“And in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.”*

=> Satan is the ruler of the kingdom of the air.

Eph 2:2 *In which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.*

=> Satan is the king of a kingdom.

Mat 12:26 *“If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand?”*

Mat 4:8-9 *Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”*

=> Satan has his grip upon the whole world.

1 John 5:19 *We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.*

2. There is the origin of the dragon or devil. This statement is telling where Satan came from. This is clearly seen in the Greek tenses of the statement. Note the two statements in the Greek:

=> His tail “sweeps” (surei, present tense) a third part of heaven. That is, Satan pulls and drags a third of the stars (angels) of heaven.

=> He “flung” (ebalen) them down or threw them down. This is past tense; that is, it tells us what Satan did long ago.

The point is this: today, in the present moment, Satan has authority over one third of the stars or angels of heaven. How? Because in the past he flung them down with himself. Now note two points.

a. Where were Satan and the angels flung down from? Heaven. They were the stars of heaven, but they were cast down from heaven. Eons ago, sometime before man ever began, God created an angel, the highest and most glorious being ever created.

=> His name is Lucifer which means star of the morning.

=> He was the anointed cherub who covered the very throne of God itself. He was the angel put in charge of the glory of God’s very own throne.

But something happened: he did what so many people do. He began to look at himself, and he began to want to live like he wanted instead of like God wanted. He wanted to do his own thing instead of doing like God said. Therefore, he rebelled against God, and in his rebellion he led one third of the angelic beings with him. Consequently, God had no choice but to cast him down from his exalted position in heaven. From what we can glean from Scripture this is what happened to Lucifer, how he became the devil, the arch-enemy of God (see *Satan*, Rev. 12:9; *Satan*, 2 Cor. 4:4; note, 1 Pet. 5:8).

Isa 14:12-15 *How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit.*

Ezek 28:11-19 *The word of the Lord came to me: “Son of man. take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: “‘You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz and emerald,*

chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendour. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings. By your many sins and dishonest trade you have desecrated your sanctuaries. So I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching. All the nations who knew you are appalled at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.’”

Rev 12:3-4 *Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. 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.*

3. There is the aim of the dragon or devil. Satan’s aim is to devour the woman, to destroy Israel. This has always been Satan’s aim. Why? Because he is out to get back at God for judging him. He is out to hurt God, to cut the heart of God. And the best way he can do this is to turn the hearts of people away from God and lead them to sin and to follow the way of evil.

Now, go way back in history again, to the time when God promised to send the Saviour to the world. When God first promised to send Christ to save the world. Satan knew it. He was listening. He was the serpent who had tempted Adam and Eve and led them to sin and hurt God. But God loved Adam and Eve and wanted to save them from sin and death; therefore, God promised to send the seed, the Saviour of the world, who would crush the head and power of Satan.

Gen 3:15 *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”*

As stated, Satan heard the promise. Consequently, he was bound to do all he could to delay the coming of the Seed, the Saviour. He, of course, knew what we know: no person can stop God’s plan and will. But Satan wanted to get as many people as he could to sin and to turn away from God so that God’s heart would be cut and hurt. He wanted to delay his own defeat and the crushing of his head as long as he could. This is what is meant by this verse:

Rev 12:4 *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.*

Satan has tried from the very beginning to destroy the seed of the woman. He has been waging war against the Seed of God, the Saviour of the world, ever since God promised to save the world. The great Baptist preacher W. A. Criswell points this out by tracing some of the attempts of the devil throughout the Bible (*Expository Sermon On Revelation*, Vol. 4. Grand Rapids. MI: Zondervan, 1969, p. 86-87). For clarity, the attempts are put in chart form by us.

THE SEED OR LINE THROUGH WHOM THE PROMISED SEED WAS TO COME	THE STRATEGIES OF SATAN TO DESTROY THE SEED OR DEVOUR THE CHILD AND GOD’S GREAT DELIVERANCE
=> There was the line of Abel, Adam’s Son.	* Satan led Cain to kill Abel, but God gave Adam another son, Seth (Gen. 4:1f).
=> There was the early line of the godly seed.	* Satan led the godly line to mix with the ungodly and led them into such vile wickedness that God had to destroy the earth. But God raised up Noah (Gen. 6:5f).
=> There was the line of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.	* Satan led Esau to threaten to kill his brother, Jacob. But God protected Jacob (Gen. 27:41f).
=> There was the line of the children of Israel.	* Satan led Pharaoh to attempt to kill all the male babies of Israel. But God saved Moses (Exo. 1:8f)
=> There was the line of David.	* Satan led son after son of David into sin and to murder and disqualify themselves.
=> There was the line of the sons of David.	But God always kept at least one son of David alive (2 Sam. 13f).
=> There was the line of Jehosaphat’s sons.	* Satan led Jehoram, one of Jehosaphat’s sons, to kill all his brothers. But God caused sons to be born to Jehoram to carry on the line (2 Chr. 21:1f).
=> There was the line of Ahaziah.	* Satan led an enemy to come in and kill all the sons but one — Ahaziah (2 Kng. 8:25f).
	* Satan led Jehu to kill Ahaziah, and the queen’s mother, Athaliah, took over the throne and killed all the sons. But God led the wife of the high priest to save one small

=> There was the line of the chosen people. => There was the line of the Promised Seed, Jesus Himself, at His birth. => There was the line of the Promised Seed, Jesus Himself, at his temptation. => There was the line of the Promised Seed, Jesus Himself, at his hometown, Nazareth. => There was the line of the Promised Seed, Jesus Himself, in facing the religionists.. => There was the line of the Promised Seed, Jesus Himself, on the cross.	baby, Joash. At this point the line of the promised seed rested in the saving of this little baby's life (2 Kng. 9:11f). * Satan led King Ahasuerus to exterminate all of God's people. But God gave him a most restless and frightening night of sleep. The king, therefore, spared the chosen line (Esther). * Satan led King Herod to slay all the babies in Bethlehem in an attempt to kill the promised child. But God warned Joseph and told Joseph to flee with the child (Mt. 2:1f). * Satan tempted Jesus to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, to secure the loyalty and worship of the people by the spectacular instead of the cross. But Jesus chose God's way, the way of the cross, instead of Satan's way (Mt. 4:1f). * Satan led the citizens of Nazareth to try to cast Jesus off the cliff of a hill, but Jesus escaped (Lk. 4:29). * Satan led the religionists to hate Jesus and to plot is death time and again (Jn. 7:1f). But Jesus escaped time and again. * Satan led the world to put Jesus on the cross and to kill Him. But God raised Jesus from the dead (Jn. 19:1f).
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This is how Satan has attempted to hurt God, by doing all he could to devour the woman, the line of Israel. He did all he could to keep the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, from being born. Now that Christ has come, Satan does all he can to turn people away from judgment to come. Even when people do repent and turn to follow Christ, Satan does all he can to turn the followers of the Lord away from Him.

This is the battle, the combat, the struggle that is going on behind the scenes in the spiritual world. And the war will wage on and on until the world ends. The point of the present passage in Revelation is to show how the struggle will intensify in the

great tribulation. During the great tribulation Satan will use all the resources that he has to destroy the “seed of the woman,” the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. He will do all he can to cut and hurt the heart of God. God is not willing that a single soul perish; therefore, when Satan is successful in turning and destroying one person, the heart of God is cut and hurt as deeply as a cut can pierce.

Thought 1. Note; although the present passage is dealing primarily with the great tribulation, the same spiritual struggle is waged in every generation of history. Satan is out to turn every person he can away from God. He wants people to follow him instead of God. He wants the obedience of people instead of people giving their obedience and loyalty to God.

III. *Revelation 12:05 Jesus Christ*

There is the third character in the great tribulation, Jesus Christ Himself. Note two points.

1. Jesus Christ was born or sent into the world to rule the world. He was sent by God to bring godliness and righteousness to earth, to use an iron sceptre of judgment in order to get rid of sin and ungodliness in the world.
 - a. This He did, of course, by the cross. Upon the cross Jesus Christ made it possible for men to be forgiven their sins and to stand before God, to stand before God free of sin. He did this by bearing the sins of men upon Himself when He died on the cross. He took the sins and the punishment of sins upon Himself. Therefore, man can now be free of sin and acceptable to God. Jesus Christ judged sin, condemned it upon the cross. Therefore, we can say that the rod of iron was used first of all upon Satan when Jesus Christ died upon the cross. Jesus Christ judged and destroyed the power of Satan.

John 12:31 *“Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.”*

Heb 2:14 *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil.*

Col 2:15 *And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

1 John 3:8 *He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.*

- b. Jesus Christ will also use the iron sceptre against the nations of the world — against all the ungodly and evil of the world — in the end time. Jesus Christ shall rule all nations and bring righteousness and godliness to this earth by exerting all the authority and discipline of God needed. He shall bring the kingdom of God to earth.

Psa 2:9 “You will rule them with an iron sceptre; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”

Rev 2:27 ‘He will rule them with an iron sceptre; he will dash them to pieces like pottery’ — just as I have received authority from my Father.

Rev 19:15 Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. “He will rule them with an iron sceptre.” He treads the wine-press of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.

2. Jesus Christ ascended and was exalted to the throne of God. This is proof that He shall rule and reign and bring righteousness to the earth.

Luke 22:69 “But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.”

Rom 1:4 And who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

Eph 1:20 Which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.

Phil 2:9-11 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

1 Pet 3:22 Who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand — with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

Isa 9:6-7 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. ■

THE MIGHTY SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE BEHIND THE GREAT TRIBULATION REVELATION 12:06–17

Introduction

The curtain has been rolled back between earth and heaven, and we have seen a mighty spiritual conflict going on behind all the ungodliness and evil of this world. We have seen that the dragon, the devil, is out to hurt and cut the heart of God. He does this by turning people away from Christ and leading them to destroy their lives by following evil. The Revelation has shown us this: the rampage of the devil against God will intensify in the end time, especially during the *tribulation*. This is the weighty discussion of this passage: *the spiritual struggle behind the great tribulation — the dragon's (Satan's) attacks against the woman (Israel)*.

- I. The woman flees for her life (v. 6).
- II. The great war over Israel and God's people is fought in heaven (vv. 7-9).
- III. The glorious victory and salvation are won (vv. 10-11).
- IV. The warning to earth is given (v.12).
- V. The dragon launches an attack upon the woman (vv. 13-17).

I. Revelation 12:06 The Great Tribulation of Israel

The woman flees for her life. This is the picture of the terrible holocaust of the end time. We know this because of the thousand two hundred and sixty days (three and one half years) mentioned. This is the period always referred to as the *great tribulation* (see note, pt. 2-4, Rev. 11:2). The woman, Israel, is going to be severely persecuted by the antichrist in the end time. The Jews are going to have to flee for their lives, flee to the wilderness of the mountains, hills and forests — to every hiding place they can find. However we must always keep in mind that the holocaust is going to be launched against the Gentile believers of the end time as well. There will literally be millions — a numberless number — of Gentile believers slaughtered right along with the Jews (cp. Rev. 7:9). All believers and Israel, the Old Testament people of God, will be fleeing to every corner of wilderness in the world, seeking any place they can to hide.

Note the wonderful promise: God has a place for His people to hide. God is going to save a remnant of believers. He is going to use this persecution to turn even more Jews to His Son, who is the true Messiah, even the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rom 11:2 *God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah — how he appealed to God against Israel:*

Rom 11:15 *For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?*

Rom 11:23-24 *And if they [Israel] do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. After all, if you [Gentile believers] were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree [Israel], how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!*

Rom 11:25-26 *I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.”*

2 Tim 1:12 *That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.*

Psa 57:1 *When he had fled from Saul into the cave: Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for in you my soul takes refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.*

Psa 121:4 *Indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.*

Isa 25:4 *You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat. For the breath of the ruthless is like a storm driving against a wall.*

Isa 43:1-2 *But now, this is what the Lord says he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.*

II. Revelation 12:07–09 The Great War over God’s People

The great war over Israel and God’s people is to be fought in heaven. The mighty struggle for the believer’s soul occurs in the spiritual realm, the spiritual world or dimension of being. This is the picture of these three verses. The intense struggle for the souls of Israel and the believers in the end time will be occurring in the spiritual world. Remember: Israel and the believers are having to flee for their lives from the worst holocaust the world has ever seen. It has been launched by the antichrist, the one man who embodies the very evil of the devil himself. These verses show us what lies behind this terrible holocaust, what is causing the terrible attack against Israel and the believers.

1. The forces of the spiritual struggle are Michael and his angels and Satan and his fallen angels. Note several things.
 - a. Scripture teaches that God has assigned angels to look after and to minister to believers.

Heb 1:14 *Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? (See Angels, Heb. 1:4-14.)*

- b. Scripture teaches there are ranks and orders of angels, that there are various levels of authority among angels. They rule as powers over the spiritual world. This is true among both good and evil angels.

Rom 8:38-39 *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Eph 1:21 *[Christ is] far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.*

Eph 3:10 *His intent [purpose] was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.*

Eph 6:12 *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

Col 1:16 *For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.*

Col 2:10 *And you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.*

Col 2:15 *And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

- c. Michael is one of the archangels who serves God. In Scripture he is presented as being above all the other angels. He seems to be the prime administrator of God (Dan. 10:21; 12:1, 7-12; 1 Th. 4:16; Jude 9). He is also pictured as the guardian angel of God's people. He struggles against the fallen angels who seek control over the nations and people of the earth (Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1; cp. Dan. chapters 10-12).
- 2. A spiritual war will be fought in the end time between the spiritual forces of good and evil. Satan and his angels will attempt to do what they have always tried to do: stamp out Israel and the followers of Christ. But there will be one difference: verse twelve tells us what it is. Satan "knows that his time is short." God will be ready to end human history. Therefore, Satan will attack both Israel and the believers as never before. He will literally try to wipe out every Jew and believer that he can. Why? Because every one who is killed will never be able to accept Christ nor bear testimony and lead anyone else to Christ. God will hurt and be cut that much more because more people will be lost and never became true worshippers of God.

But note what the glorious outcome of the battle will be. Satan and his fallen angels will be *defeated* and cast out of heaven once for all. After this event — when this battle takes place in the *great tribulation* — Satan will never again have access into heaven. He will never again accuse a believer before God.

Remember: Satan is said to presently have access to heavenly places and to God (Lk. 10:18; Eph. 6:12; Job 1:6f). But this will be the final battle between evil and good. This is the picture being painted by Revelation. After this battle, Satan will be defeated forever.

Dan 10:14 *“Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come.”*

Dan 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. But at that time your people — everyone whose name is found written in the book — will be delivered.”*

Thought 1. In all the graphic description of the above we must remember what will be happening upon earth. Israel and believers will be suffering the worst horror of evil ever launched upon earth: the holocaust of the antichrist. He will be doing all he can to eliminate every Jew and believer from the face of the earth. Why? All because of the dragon, that ancient serpent, called the devil and Satan. (See *Satan*, Rev. 12:9.)

REVELATION 12:09 SATAN

*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. **Rev. 12:09***

Satan is called “the great dragon...that ancient serpent.” His name is *Lucifer*. He was probably one of the highest angels ever created by God, but he fell because of selfishness and pride (Isa. 14:12; cp. 1 Tim. 3:6; Rev. 12:3-4; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; 1 Pet. 5:8.). He is “an angel of light” with such deceptive and seductive power that even some ministers follow him, ministers who “masquerade as servants of righteousness” (2 Cor. 11:14-15). Throughout Scripture Satan is described as follows:

1. He is “the god of this world” who blinds men’s minds (2 Cor. 4:4).
2. He is “the prince of this world” (Jn. 12:31; 14:20; 16:11) and “the ruler of the kingdom of the air” (Eph. 2:2; 6:12).
3. He is Satan, which means the adversary (1 Chr. 21:1; Job 1:6; 2:1-6; Zec. 3:1; Mt. 4:10; Mk. 1:13; Lk. 4:8; Jn. 13:27; Acts 5:3; 26:18; Rom. 16:20).
4. He is the deceiver of the whole world (2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9).

5. He is the devil, which means the slanderer (Mt. 4:1, 5, 8, 11; Lk. 4:2-6, 13; 1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 20:2).
6. He is the tempter (Mt. 4:3; 1 Th. 3:5).
7. He is the evil one (Mt. 6:13; 13:19, 38).
8. He is the father of lies (Jn. 8:44).
9. He is the accuser of our brothers (Rev. 12:10).
10. He is a murderer (Jn. 8:44).
11. He is called Beelzebub (Mt. 12:24; Mk. 3:22; Lk. 11:15).
12. He is called Belial (2 Cor. 6:15).
13. He is called Abaddon (Rev. 9:11).
14. He is called the angel of the Abyss or bottomless pit (Rev. 9:11).
15. He is called Apollyon (Rev. 9:11).
16. He is called the enemy (Mt. 13:39).
17. He is called the gates of Hades (hell) (Mt. 16:18).
18. He is called an enormous red dragon (Rev. 12:3).
19. He is called a lying spirit (1 Kng. 22:22).
20. He is called that ancient serpent (Rev. 12:9; 20:2; cp. Gen. 3:4, 14; 2 Cor. 11:3).
21. He is called the dominion of darkness (Col. 1:13).
22. He called the prince of devils (Mt. 12:24).
23. He is called the ruler of this dark world (Eph. 6:12).
24. He is called the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient (Eph. 2:2).
25. He is called the evil spirit (Mt. 12:43).

Satan's purpose in making war against God is twofold.

1. Satan's purpose is power and worship, to receive as much of the power and worship of the universe as possible (Isa. 14:12-17; Ezk. 28:11-17). He goes about this in three ways.
 - => He opposes and disturbs God's work in the world (Isa. 14:12-17; Ezk. 28:11-17; Job 1:6; 2:1-6; Mt. 4:10; Mk. 1:13; Lk. 4:8; Rev. 12:7-9).
 - => He discourages believers through various strategies (Lk. 22:31; Eph. 6:10-12).
 - => He arouses God's justice against people by leading people to sin and to deny and rebel against God. And when they do, God's justice has to act and judge people to the fate of their choice: that of living with Satan eternally (Mt. 12:25-26; Jn. 13:31-32).
2. Satan's purpose is to hurt and cut the heart of God. Why? Because God has judged and condemned him for rebelling against God. Therefore, Satan does all

he can to get back at God. The best way he can do this is to turn the hearts of people away from God and lead them to sin and to follow the way of evil.

However, Christ has broken Satan's power by two acts (Jn. 12:31-32; 16:11; 8:44: Col. 2:15).

1. By never giving in to the devil's temptation (Mt. 4:1-11) and by never sinning (2 Cor. 5:21). Christ overcame sin. He was righteous: He was perfect.
2. By destroying the devil's power of death. Christ was not held by physical or spiritual death (Heb. 2:14-15). He arose and ascended to God's right hand.

It is for this reason that the Bible says "the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 Jn. 4:4); and again. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). □

III. *Revelation 12:10–11 Glorious Victory and Salvation*

The glorious victory and salvation are won by Christ. Note three facts.

1. A loud voice in heaven will shout out that the victory and salvation are now won — once-for-all. Who will this voice be? God's people. We know this because the voice refers to "our brothers." Note what the voice will declare:
 - ⇒ The great salvation of our God: God will be ready to launch the glorious day of salvation, the day of redemption, to bring every person who has ever trusted him into eternity. God will be ready to save the whole world, making a new heavens and earth. The final triumph of salvation will be ready to take place.
 - ⇒ The great strength of God will have just been demonstrated. Satan will have been defeated and cast out of heaven.
 - ⇒ The great kingdom of our God will now be ready to be established forever and ever.
 - ⇒ The power of God's Christ and Messiah will be proven. Every true believer will now live with God forever, worshipping and serving Him — all because of the power of God's Messiah.

1 Cor 4:20 *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.*

Rev 11:17 *Saying: "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign."*

Rev 19:6 *Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns."*

2. The result of God's salvation will be glorious: Satan will be barred from heaven. He will no longer be able to accuse believers before God. Scripture teaches that Satan takes the sins of believers and throws them up into God's face. He points out every

failure of a believer. Why? As stated before, to hurt and cut God. God gave His Son to die for the sins of men. Therefore, every time a believer sins, the devil reminds God...

- that the death of His Son was wasted and useless; it was not worth the price if believers are going to trample the blood of Christ underfoot.
- that the believers' love for Christ and God is hypocritical and shameful.
- that the believer could care less about God and Christ: he does not care enough to obey God. If he did, the believer would not sin.
- that the believer is not worth all the pain and hurt; that God should go ahead and wipe out the human race.

On and on we could go, but the point is the accusation of Satan against believers. But note: Satan will be thrown out of heaven. He will never again be able to appear before God and cut God by the sins and failures of believers.

Zec 3:1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him.

Job 1:6 One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them.

3. The weapons used to gain the victory over Satan will be threefold. Remember these are the very weapons that Michael and the angels will use in the battle with Satan (v. 7-9). Michael and the angels will protect Israel and the believers in the end time, and a remnant of Israel and of Gentiles will be saved. How?
 - a. By the blood of the Lamb, of the Lord Jesus Christ (see note, pt. 2, Rev. 5:6-7).
 - b. By the word of their testimony, that is, by proclaiming the Word of God and by continuing to confess the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Acts 4:20 "For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

2 Tim 1:8 So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.

1 Pet 3:15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

- c. By being loyal to Christ even to death. Note: many will die, millions in fact. But they shall live eternally. They shall never taste death. Quicker than the blink of an eye God shall transfer them to heaven into His very presence. But remember why: because they were loyal; they stood fast in Christ and refused to deny Him.

Mat 16:25 "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it."

Luke 9:23 Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

Luke 14:26-27 *“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters — yes, even his own life — he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”*

Luke 18:29-30 *“I tell you the truth,” Jesus said to them, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life.”*

1 Cor 15:58 *Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.*

2 Tim 4:18 *The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Thought 1. The only way we can ever conquer Satan is to use these same three weapons.

- 1) We must be covered by the blood of the Lamb and we must claim the blood of the Lamb.
- 2) We must have a strong testimony for Christ, strongly proclaim the Word of God and continue to confess the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour.
- 3) We must be loyal to Christ even to death (Mt. 10:22).

IV. Revelation 12:12 Warning to the World

The warning to earth is given. Satan will be hurled, cast down to earth, and he will have one more chance to wreck and destroy all he can. Remember two things:

- => First, the rise of the antichrist is a judgment of God upon earth and its people. Why? Because of people's ungodliness, evil, idolatry, murder, sorcery, immorality and thievery. In the end time evil will grow worse and worse. Therefore God will let man run wild with their evil, have their own way; and in the end, men will turn to a world leader who promises utopia upon earth, the antichrist himself.
- => Second, Satan has been hurled out of heaven. In the great tribulation Satan is a defeated foe, but he will not be destroyed — not yet. God is going to judge the world through him.

This is what is being pictured in this verse. When Satan is cast out of heaven, he knows he has but a brief time. Therefore, he stirs up the antichrist to create the worst devastation ever seen upon earth.

V. Revelation 12:13–17 Terrible Attack against the Woman

The dragon, the devil, will launch a terrible attack against the woman. Four points are given.

1. Satan will severely persecute the woman, Israel, and all believers who refuse to deny Christ. There will be a holocaust unparalleled in human history. Through the antichrist, Satan will launch an attempt to literally wipe the Jews and believers from

off the face of the earth. The world will witness not a local or national holocaust but a world-wide slaughter. All over the world...

- the knock on the door by the secret police will be heard by frightened Jews and believers hovered in the corners of their homes.
 - the arrests and jailing will be efficient and quick and will include children as well as adults.
 - the boxcars will roll once again as they have so often in history, packing Jews and believers together like herded cattle.
 - the execution camps will be restored and the executions will be quick and efficient.
2. The woman (Israel) and the believers will be delivered by the wings of an eagle. This is simply a picture of the delivering arms of God. This does not mean, of course, that no Jew and no believer will be killed. The exact opposite is true: the antichrist will slaughter millions, more by far than any other holocaust ever launched in history (cp. Rev. 7:4, 9). God will give His dear people the wings of an eagle to deliver some on home to heaven and others to safety upon earth. Note that the persecution will continue for three and one half years (cp. v. 6).

Exo 19:4 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.'

Deu 32:11-12 Like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions. The Lord alone led him; no foreign god with him.

3. The serpent, the devil, will attempt to flood Israel and believers with tribulation after tribulation. The idea is an onrushing flood of trouble and persecution, attempt after attempt, horror after horror.

Psa 18:4 The cords of death entangled me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.

Psa 32:6 Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him.

Psa 124:4 The flood would have engulfed us, the torrent would have swept over us.

Isa 43:1-2 But now, this is what the Lord says he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze."

4. There will be enormous help coming from the earth. God is going to use the earth to swallow up the flooding waters or attacks, of the devil and his antichrist. This probably means one or both of the following:

- => The devastations, natural catastrophes, of God's judgments upon the earth will distract and require the attention of the antichrist. The catastrophes, natural suffering of the earth, will save a remnant of Israel and believers. Remember the enormous destruction upon earth that has already happened due to the seal and trumpet judgments (see notes, Rev. 6:3-8; 6:12-17; 8:6-9:11; 8:6-12; 8:13-9:11; 9:12-21). There will also be nations who do not go along with the policies of the antichrist and they will give refuge to the Jews and believers who escape to their shores.
- => The dragon will launch an attack upon the rest of the woman's seed. This probably refers to the devil and his antichrist launching a more aggressive attack against the Jews and believers who did not flee to other parts of the earth for safety (nations or barren and destroyed parts). Again, remember that vast areas of the earth will be barren due to the natural catastrophes or judgments of God. This could be what is meant by the wilderness areas to which so many flee. In this day, when travel is so easy and with spy satellites and airplanes and helicopters, the wilderness has to mean either huge areas of vast wastelands or else nations that will be sympathetic to the persecuted believers. But not all will flee. Therefore, the antichrist will turn against those who remain behind with more animosity than ever.

Thought 1. The attacks of Satan have always been devastating, devastating in that his attacks destroy human lives. We must, therefore, stand fast in Christ and proclaim the victory of Christ over the devil. People can be saved through Jesus Christ alone. Therefore, the glorious message of salvation in Christ must be proclaimed to every man, woman and child on earth. Jesus Christ is their only hope of deliverance from the destruction of Satan.

2 Cor 11:3 But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

Eph 6:10-11 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

Heb 2:14-15 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

James 4:7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

1 Pet 5:8-9 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. ■