

The Woman and the Dragon

Revelation 12:1-6, 13-17 and Matthew 24:15-28

DIG: Describe the woman, the dragon and the child. Who do they represent? Where in the TaNaKh do we find this? What triggers the persecution? What should the Israelites do? What should they guard against? Where do they go?

REFLECT: What do you learn here about spiritual warfare? What do you need to guard against? How do you feel about the persecution of the Jews. Who else will the antichrist persecute? Is any of this happening today? How does it affect you?

Chapters 11 through 14 are parenthetical. They add some detail about the middle of the Great Tribulation and show us why the bowl judgments will be so necessary.

The first event tied to the breaking of the seven year covenant (see Dq - **The Breaking of the Seven Year Covenant**) will be the beginning of a worldwide persecution of the Israelites that start with **the abomination that causes desolation** (see Dr - **The Abomination That Causes Desolation**). Satan has always had a special antagonism against the Jews. Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of ADONAI and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him (Zechariah 3:1). At this point in the Great Tribulation, Satan knows that his time is running out and there will be an all-out satanically organized campaign to wipe out the Jews once and for all.

Here, Jesus warns the Jews living at the time that the seven year covenant is broken. **So when you see standing in the Most Holy Place the abomination that causes desolation, spoken of through the prophet Daniel - let the reader understand - then those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers (Matthew 24:15-19). They are warned that when the beast is standing in the Most Holy Place, they are to leave Isra'el with all haste and hit the ground running.**

Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath (Matthew 24:20). Why not in the winter? After all, it seldom snows in Isra'el anyway. The reason for this prayer is that the Jews will be escaping toward the mountains in the east. Most of the escape routes will force them to use *wadis*, which are dry riverbeds that only fill up with flash floods when it rains during the winter months. Isra'el receives no rain between April and October. From October through the winter months up until April, Isra'el receives all its rain for the year. But when it does rain, many of these *wadis* instantly become filled and are

very dangerous to cross. Many have drowned because they are caught in these riverbeds during a flash flood. If **the abomination that causes desolation** happened during the winter months, it would make their escape to the east much more difficult. So prayer is encouraged that it would not happen during **the winter**.

Why not **on the Sabbath**? There is no public transportation in **Isra'el on the Sabbath**. The buses are all locked up and the trains do not run. Unless an **Israeli** has **his** or **her** own transportation, **he** or **she** will find it very difficult to escape. An example of this problem was seen during the Yom Kippur War of 1973. The Arabs attacked on a holy day when there was no public transportation. This made it extremely difficult for **the Israelis** to mobilize **their** forces and get **them** to the front lines. So prayer was urged that it would not happen **on the Sabbath**.³¹³

At this point, worldwide anti-Semitism breaks out. **For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now - and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened (Matthew 24:21-22)**. The Lord will allow this to happen for 42 months or three-and-a-half years.

Then **Jesus** gives a special message to the believing remnant within **Isra'el**. **He** warns them not to listen to any rumor that **Christ** has returned or has come out of hiding. **At that time if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!" Or, "There He is!" do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect - if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time. So if anyone tells you, "There He is, out in the desert," do not go out; or, "Here He is, in the inner rooms," do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. When the Messiah returns, everyone will see Him. You won't have to guess if He has come back or not (Matthew 24:23-27)**.

The first section of **chapter 12** summarizes the entire life of **Messiah** from just before **His birth** to **His** ascension up to heaven. In the first **sign**, **Isra'el** is portrayed as a woman, a motif taken from the concept of **Israel** in the TaNaKh as **the Wife of ADONAI (Isaiah 54:5; Jeremiah 3:6-14)**. **A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven. The Greek word for sign, or semeion, indicates a mark or symbol that carries symbolic meaning or points to something beyond it. Here, the sign will be a woman (Isra'el) clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars (for the twelve tribes of Isra'el) on her head (Genesis 37:9-11). She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth (12-1-2)**. This pictures the nation of **Isra'el** just before the birth of **Christ**.

Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon, or Satan. The seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads represent Satan's control over world empires during the Great Tribulation (12:3).

Satan's tail swept a third of the fallen angels out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman (Isra'el) who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child, the Messiah, the moment it was born (12:4). This attempt to devour Christ was seen in the slaughter of babes of Bethlehem in Matthew 2:16-18. The adversary's attempt to destroy Christ both before His proper time (the Passover), and by the wrong means (stoning in place of crucifixion) continued throughout the course of His life.³¹⁴ Satan failed, however, because she gave birth to a son (Isaiah 66:7), a male child who was destined to rule all the nations of the world with an iron scepter as ADONAI (Psalm 2:8-9). And her child was snatched up, or ascended up to the LORD and to His throne (Revelation 12:5), where He presently sits at the right hand of God the Father interceding for His holy ones (Romans 8:34).

After this historical survey, John's vision takes us to events that will occur in the middle of the Great Tribulation. The woman (Isra'el) fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by ADONAI, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days, or the last 42 months of the Great Tribulation (Revelation 12:6). At this point Satan is thrown out of heaven full of wrath and anger because he knows his time is short (Revelation 12:7-12).

Then, in 12:13, John tells us that when the dragon (Satan) saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he persecuted the woman (Isra'el) who had given birth to the male child (Christ). Do you know why Satan persecutes Isra'el? Because Jesus was born a Jew, he hates Yeshua. Satan probably wanted the place of Jesus in the Trinity. But whether that is true or not, he hates Jesus Christ with a passion. Satan's great motive is to tear down the deity of Jesus. His goal is to make people think the Messiah is a mere man who doesn't deserve the honor that God the Father says belongs to Him. And if all the Israelites are dead, then YHVH cannot fulfill His promise to give the Land to the Jews and set up David as King in the messianic Kingdom. This would be God a liar and our salvation would be in vain.

The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert (12:14a). The expression, eagles' wings, is a Hebrew idiom that means *a successful escape after being pursued*. You can also find it in Exodus 19:4, Deuteronomy 32:11 with the same meaning. There she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time (three-and-a-half years), out of the serpent's reach (12:14b).

Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. But the earth helped the woman (Isra'el), like in the days of Korah's rebellion (Numbers 16:31-35) by opening its mouth and swallowing the river (military invasion) that the dragon (Satan) had spewed out of his mouth (12:15-16). Whenever the figure of a flood is used symbolically, it is always a symbol of a military invasion. But the invasion will fail because Israel will succeed in fleeing **to the desert**. Then the dragon (Satan) was even more enraged at the woman (Isra'el) and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring (the faithful remnant) who obey God's commandments (Genesis 3:15) and hold to the testimony of Yeshua (Revelation 12:17).

When Israel flees **to the mountains** (Matthew 24:16), ADONAI says: I will assemble all of you, Jacob; I will gather the remnant of Isra'el, I will put them together like sheep in a pen, like a herd in its pasture - it will hum with the sounds of people (Micah 2:12 CJB). The city of refuge will be the ancient city of Bozrah, known today as Petra, in the region of Mount Seir in southern Jordan that was formerly known as Edom or *red* (also see my commentary on **Isaiah Rq - The Second Coming of the Messiah**). It is one of the seven wonders of the world and is totally surrounded by **mountains** and cliffs. The only way in or out is through a narrow passageway that extends for about a mile and can only be traveled by foot or by horseback. This makes it easy to defend, and its surrounding high cliffs. Only a few shoulder to shoulder can enter through this passage at any one time, making this city even easier to defend. The name Bozrah means **sheep pen**, and Petra is shaped like a giant **sheep pen**. Petra will escape the domination of the antichrist (Daniel 11:41), so it is logical for the Jews to flee to there where food and water will supernaturally be provided (Isaiah 41:17-20).³¹⁵ It will be the place where **Jesus Christ** physically returns to **save the dwellings of Judah first** (Zechariah 12:7). **Messiah** will have the red blood of **His** enemies splattered all over **His** robe (19:13). The red blood will come from the red place, Edom.