

Revelation 12 Has Nothing to Do With Tomorrow

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 with child and cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. Then another sign appeared in heaven: There was a great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven, and threw them to the earth. The dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as He was born. She gave birth to a male Child, "who was to rule all nations with an iron scepter." And her Child was caught up to God and to His throne. The woman fled into the wilderness where she has a place prepared by God, that they may nourish her there for one thousand two hundred and sixty days (Rev. 12:1-6).

In the account of the sun-clothed Woman and the man-child that is caught up to heaven in Revelation 12, the rest of the seed of the woman is left behind on the earth (v. 17). Now some may argue and say that this account is mainly dealing with Israel and Christ, but a closer look will reveal otherwise.

Spiritual Israel is certainly included in the sun-clothed woman, but we must understand that she represents more than Israel. She is a heavenly sign that is more symbolic of the glorious church than Israel.

Most dispensational interpretations say that the sun-clothed woman is national Israel, but how can that be? National Israel rejected Jesus Christ. Certainly Israel is represented in the symbolism of the woman and the man-Child, but it is spiritual Israel. It would be absurd to interpret that national Israel who put Christ to death is symbolized in the glorious sun-

clothed woman! The Christ-rejecting Jews are more clearly represented as followers of the dragon than the woman (Rev. 2:9). Even Jesus told the unbelieving Jews that they were of their father, the devil (John 8:39, 44). Paul himself said a Jew is not one outwardly, but inwardly by the Spirit (Rom 2:28-29).

The more accurate interpretation of this marvelous symbol of the sun-clothed woman is that she represents the people of God of all ages. She is the church in the wilderness of the Old Testament, God's people Israel, and she is also the glorious New Testament church. She is the church of all dispensations of time who is depicted here in Rev. 12 in an age long conflict with the dragon Satan that began in the garden of Eden. Again, she does include spiritual Israel, but certainly not national Israel. Notice that the great fiery red dragon has seven crowns on his seven heads, which in the symbolism, most Bible scholars agree, represents the entire period of human history in its seven empires.

The man-child, which has been interpreted as being applied solely to Christ, is also incomplete, because Christ did not escape death by being raptured, and second, Christ was born 100 years before this prophecy. All prophecy relates to the future and not the past. Certainly, in a general way, there is a parallel here with Israel and Christ in the symbolism of the Woman and the man-child, but it is not the primary fulfillment of this prophecy.

Third, notice in Revelation 12:5-6 that the remnant of the woman's seed is left behind and flees into the wilderness for 1260 days, which is approximately 3.5 years, the same duration of the Great Tribulation when the Antichrist rules. The expression "the remnant of her offspring" (v. 17) tells us a large number of her seed has been taken away in rapture.

At the end of the church age, some saints are ready for the Lord's return at the first phase of His coming, called the

rapture. Clearly some are not. Some are taken, and some are left. Some are caught away before the Great Tribulation, and some go through it. The man-child company are those caught up to the throne who are the firstfruits unto God (Rev. 14:4). The remnant of the woman's seed is those left behind, whom I believe are a part of the great multitude who came out of the Great Tribulation (Rev. 7).

A closer look at another golden clue identifies the time period of this symbolism. The dragon has seven heads and 10 horns. Notice that the horns are not yet crowned, but in Revelation 13:1, they are crowned. What does that mean? Most Bible scholars agree that the 10 horns in this imagery represent the 10 kings who have power only when the Antichrist reigns. This means that he is not yet reigning at the beginning of Revelation 12, but is in Revelation 13:1.

Through this symbolism we can safely determine that the sun-clothed woman and the dragon Satan are portrayed as spiritual enemies throughout the ages with the moment of action marked by the travail, birth and subsequent rapture of the man-child.

This is the glorious rapture of the church for those who are watchful, prayerful, consecrated, and ready—not some far-fetched, scientific, ridiculous theories of astrological constellations. How thrilling a possibility it is to be included in this company! This, and not the other, should be the supreme preoccupation and magnificent obsession of every saint.