

Revelation 12 Notes

Importance of Revelation 12:

- It outlines dramatic, earth-quaking events of extreme importance in the divine plan, that would forever re-shape the course of history
- It contains practical exhortation and warning for disciples living during those events and for disciples today
- It explains how the “Man of Sin” of 2 Thess. 2 would be revealed
- It is the source of false beliefs in Christendom – namely, a fallen angel/devil as a result of a war in heaven

The Great Red Dragon

Key Features:

- Red
- 7 Heads & 10 Horns
- 7 Crowns upon its 7 heads
- Dwelling in “heaven”
- Tail Draws 1/3 of stars of heaven and casts them to the earth
- Desires to devour woman’s child at it’s birth
- Warring Power – at war with Michael and his angels in heaven
- Has angels
- Deceives the whole world
- Subsequently cast out into earth (like the 1/3 of stars before)
- Accuser of Christ’s brethren, which accused them before God day and night

A Symbol of Pagan Roman Empire:

- Beasts are used by God in prophecy to identify Kingdoms of the world, as in Dan.7.
- The Dragon in Rev 12 shares many similar characteristics to the Beast of the Sea in Rev 13, the beast in Rev 17, and the fourth beast Kingdom of Daniel 7, identifying them all as symbols of the Roman Empire. Different beasts are used to distinguish different phases in it’s history – but essentially, they are all representative of the Roman Empire.
- Since it’s the first in the succession of beasts in Revelation, it would make sense that it should represent the first phase of the Roman Empire – the Pagan phase, lasting from 66BC – 324AD.
- The language used to describe the Dragon in Rev.12:4,9,10 is also found in Eph.6:8-9 and 1Pet.5:8, where the apostles are making reference to the Pagan Roman Empire.
- 7 Heads identifies it with Rome (Rev. 17:9-10) – the city known for its 7 hills.
- Crowns on its head stands in contrast with crowns on the horns in the next phase (see Rev. 13:1), identifying it with the first phase of Daniel’s fourth beast in Daniel 7, before the 10 horns arise.
- Crowns = Diadem (Strong’s #1238) – symbolic of Kingly or Imperial dignity and not associated with reward. These crowns were a distinctive badge of royalty among the Greeks and Romans, and were adopted from the Persians. Diocletian was the 1st Roman Emperor to wear this crown constantly. The word occurs in Rev 12:3; 13:1; and 19:12.
- Red is the colour of sin (Isa.1:18) and warlike behaviour (Rev.6:4). The word means “fiery”, which is appropriate since Pagan Roman Generals often carried fire before them as they marched into battle, as an offering to the gods.
- The Dragon was a symbol of Egypt (Ezek. 29:3), a nation representing “sin power in political manifestation”. When Rome took Egypt and Egyptian paganism was adopted into Rome, the symbol was effectively transferred from Egypt to Rome. The Dragon was also one of the symbols used of the Pagan Roman Empire.
- The Dragon is also called “that old serpent” (12:9), which identifies it with the serpent of Gen.3:15, who would bruise the seed of the woman’s heel. This was accomplished by Pagan Rome in the crucifixion of Christ.

The Woman

3 Woman-Phases in Rev 12: 1) The woman in political glory (12:1); 2) The woman pregnant with iniquity (12:2-5); 3) The woman persecuted (12:6,13-17).

Woman: Symbol of Christian Community, both true and false

- Eve, the first woman was seen at war with the serpent, and symbolized God's elect. She however, gave birth to both Abel and Cain – both true and false worshipers. When Cain persecuted his brother, the two were separated, just as the Christian community would be separated.
- Rev 12:17 identifies the seed of the woman as being the true worshippers of God.
- The other two specific references to women in Revelation (Rev. 2:20; 17) identify it with false worshippers of God – 1st in the ecclesia, and then later separated from it.
- 2Cor.11:2-3 identifies the ecclesia as a woman – the true believers as “a chaste virgin”

The Woman in Political Glory: Rev.12:1

- Sun, Moon, and Stars are identified with the political powers in the political heavens, not the literal (Eph. 3:10 makes reference to the political heavens).
- Isa.24:23; Ezek.32:7; Joel 2:10,31; 3:15; Matt.24:29; Mark 13:24-25; Luke 21:25; Rev.6:12-13; Rev.8:12 all refer to the rulers and those in authority in the Kingdom of Men.
- Deut.4:19-20; 2Kings 23:5; Jer.8:1-2 identify the sun, moon, stars with false pagan worship.
- Sun – strongest source of energy & light – rep. Roman Emperor
- Moon – Lesser source of light & reflecting sun's light – rep. Ecclesiastical / Religious Order
- Stars – Distant stars giving their own light – rep. administrative rulers under the Emperor
- Crown – Stephanos (Strong's # 4735) – Victors crown symbolic of a reward or prize. Token of public honour for distinguished service and military prowess.
- This woman is the church clothed with imperial favour, with the pagan Roman religion under her subjection, and awarded with political ascendancy through her military achievements under Constantine. This woman of verse 1 is the end to which she will achieve. The events of the remainder of the chapter explain how she gets into such a position.

The Woman Pregnant with Iniquity: Rev. 12:2,5

- 2Cor. 11:2 – the religious community was supposed to be a chaste virgin, but was now pregnant through a large part of her adherents becoming unfaithful to the commandments of Christ.
- This departure from the faith was foretold by the apostles (2Tim.4:3-4; 2Thess.2:3; 2John 1:7-8) and seen early on in the Revelation (Rev.2:14-15; 2:20-21).
- Rev.12, in harmony with historical records, show that by the 4thc. believers had forgotten that they were not at liberty to serve in the army or take part in politics (1John 2:15; Rom.13:1-2; John 18:36).
- The result of this iniquity, was the political birth of a man-child who would bring the church to the position she is found in Rev.12:1.

The Man-Child

Key Characteristics:

- He is a political ruler who involves himself in religious matters (v5), and conquers in the name of Christ (v11). He wages war against the Great Red Dragon and casts him to the earth (v7-9), thereby establishing a Kingdom of God on earth (v10).

His Identity:

- Since we've already established the Great Red Dragon is the Roman Empire in its Pagan phase, then the man-child must be representative of the person who totally destroyed and cast the pagan rulers out of the political heavens of Rome. This was accomplished by Constantine the Great.

Constantine The Great

Full Name: Flavius Valerius Aurelius Constantinus

AKA: Constantine the Great, Constantine I, Saint Constantine

Born: Feb. 27, 272 Father: Constantius Flavius

Death: May 22, 337 (66yrs) Mother: Helena

Notable Achievements:

- First Christian Roman Emperor
- Overthrew Pagan Rulers in name of Christendom
- Reversed Persecutions of Diocletian
- Signed Edict of Milan (313) giving religious toleration
- Re-united the Empire under one head
- Transformed Greek colony Byzantium into new imperial residence, Constantinople

Historical Events of Revelation 12

V2 – Pregnant woman travailing in giving birth and pained to be delivered

- 302/3 – Diocletian (Roman Emperor) began universal persecution of all Christians.

V4 – Dragon stands ready to devour woman’s child when it was ready to be delivered

- 311 – Maxentius (Ruler of Italy) declares war on Constantine (Ruler of Britain & France) in revenge for the death of his father
- 312, Spring – Constantine invades Italy resulting in The Battle of Milvian Bridge – the final battle between Maxentius and Constantine, which Constantine won:
- “When Constantine's army made its appearance, some of its soldiers bore unusual markings on their shields: instead of the traditional pagan standards, a new sign, the *labarum*, was mounted. According to Lactantius, Constantine was visited by a dream the night before the battle, wherein he was advised "to mark the heavenly sign of God on the shields of his soldiers...by means of a slanted letter X with the top of its head bent round, he marked Christ on their shields.“ Eusebius describes another version, where, while marching at midday, "he saw with his own eyes in the heavens a trophy of the cross arising from the light of the sun, carrying the message, Conquer By This". During the following night, in a dream, Christ appeared with the heavenly sign and told him to make standards for his army in that form.” (Wikipedia)

V5 – Woman gives birth to the man-child

- 312, October 29 – Constantine enters Rome as a Christian and neglects to make the pagan sacrifice at the temple of Jupiter. The Senate names him “the Greatest Augustus” in the Empire.
- This birth is 380 day/years after the beginning of Christianity, matching the pregnancy period of a woman.

V5 – Child caught up to God and to His throne

- November 9, 312 - the former base of the Imperial Horse Guard was redeveloped into the Lateran Basilica – the official seat of the Bishop of Rome who is the Pope
- Constantine caught up in religious matters, and by removing paganism revealed the Man of Sin (2Thess.2:3-9)
- “The reign of Constantine established a precedent for the position of the Christian Emperor in the Church; Constantine considered himself responsible to God for the spiritual health of his subjects, and thus he had a duty to maintain orthodoxy. The emperor ensured that God was properly worshipped in his empire; what proper worship consisted of was for the Church to determine.” (Wikipedia)
- 325 – Constantine summons Council of Nicea, the 1st ecumenical council at which the Trinity was adopted among other things.

V6 – Woman flees into wilderness

- “In 316, Constantine acted as a judge in a North African dispute concerning the heresy of the [Donatists](#). After making a decision against the Donatists, Constantine led an army of Christians against Christians. After 300 years of pacifism, this was the first intra-Christian persecution.” (Wikipedia)
- 320 – Licinius in East begins persecution of the Christians

V4 – Dragon’s tail draws 1/3 of stars of heaven and casts them to the earth

- 313 – Constantine ruler of Western Empire (1/3); Maximinus (1/3) & Licinius (1/3) rulers of Eastern Empire. Maximinus attacks Licinius, whom Licinius conquers, leaving Constantine in West and Licinius in East. Thus, 1/3 of administrative stars in the political heavens were cast to the earth by the Dragon itself.

V7-12 – War in Heaven: Michael vs The Dragon & Dragon Cast Out

- 314 – 324: Several battles waged between Licinius and Constantine resulting in Great Civil War in 324: “Licinius, aided by [Goth mercenaries](#), represented the past and the ancient [Pagan](#) faiths. Constantine and his [Franks](#) marched under the Christian standard of the [labarum](#), and both sides saw the battle in religious terms. Supposedly outnumbered, but fired by their zeal, Constantine's army emerged victorious in the [Battle of Adrianople](#). Licinius fled across the Bosphorus... but Constantine next won the [Battle of the Hellespont](#), and finally the [Battle of Chrysopolis](#) on 18 September 324. Licinius... surrendered to Constantine at Nicomedia... Thus Constantine became the sole emperor of the Roman Empire.” (Wikipedia)
- Michael is used because Constantine foreshadows the work of the real Messiah, and because many Christians believed Constantine was establishing The Kingdom of God on Earth in the figure of The Church.

V14-17 – Woman Flees Under Persecution & Is Helped By Earth

- Having defeated the Dragon, Constantine adopts the character of the dragon in his persecution of the true believers and Protestant Christians, and by incorporating paganism into Christianity, including his maintaining of the title “Pontifex Maximus” (used previously by the pagans)
- The Woman (Protestant Christians & True Believers) flees for protection in the wings of the great Eagle (a symbol of the Roman Empire). The wings were the extremities of the empire, including Northern Africa, where many fled for refuge.
- The earth (common people) help the Protestant-Christian woman, defeat the flood (Roman Armies) sent out of mouth of dragon (Rome & Constantinople): “The woman, or persecuted minority found herself opposed by the forces of a so-called Christian state. The Circumcellions of North Africa, a movement from the lower strata of society, rose up in defence of the right of such as the Donatists to worship according to their conscience... They took up the sword in defence of political and religious liberty, and so effectively opposed the armies of Rome, as to cause their withdrawl.” (H.P.Mansfield)
- She is nourished there, and helped by “the earth” (common people) for 1,260 day/years: 312AD – 1572AD (St. Bartholomew Massacre). The day per year principle comes from Ezekiel 4:6, and is used in this passage because 1,260yrs would not fit the symbol of a woman and serpent, for both would not live that long. Therefore, days are used instead of years.

Sources:

- *13 Lectures on the Apocalypse* by Bro. Robert Roberts
- *The Book of Revelation: Verse by Verse* by Bro. H.P. Mansfield
- *The Dragon and the Lamb* by Bre. W.G. Holton & Graham Pearce
- *Eureka, Volume 3* by Bro. John Thomas
- *The Vital Message of The Revelation for Christ’s Servants Today* by Bro. Paul Billington
- Wikipidia (free online encyclopaedia) - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_I