

General Comments on Revelation 12-14

These three chapters are all one long interlude discussing the conflict between good and evil, how it starts in the pre-mortal War in Heaven (12:1-12), spills over into mortality (12:13-14:8), and ends in post-mortal Judgement (14:9-14:20).

Chapter 12 starts in the pre-mortal conflict of the War in Heaven and then quickly moves to mortality, with the woman giving birth to children who populate mortality, and the dragon seeks to destroy them in mortal conflict. Chapter 13 shows that some mortal human beings are persuaded by the dragon. Chapter 14 shows some mortal humans follow the Lamb. The gospel is preached to all, divine judgement comes and those who follow the dragon are Judged.

General Comments on Revelation 12

Chapter 12 is an interlude which explains the origin of conflict between agents of good and evil in heaven and earth. But, more particularly, the context is set for this character "the beast" which we hear a great deal about in subsequent chapters. The beast is an extension of the adversary's power (cf. 9:1, 11:7), and the adversary uses the beast to continue the former heavenly struggle (v. 1-6) attempting to accomplish the same ends on the earth (v. 12d-17).

Poetical Structure

The chapter is structured in four blocks, with each block sharing a common theme of conflict between the righteous and the adversary. The text is arranged in a vision-interpretation, interpretation-vision pattern, with the first vision (A) being a vision of the War in Heaven and the second vision (B) being a vision of the continuation of that conflict on earth:

Vision A (v. 1-9): The adversary lies in wait (v. 3-4) to destroy the woman's child (v. 1-2, 5), but is thwarted as God takes her away and sustains her (v. 6). This causes war to break out in heaven with Michael and his angels fighting the adversary and his angels (v. 7). The adversary gets thrown out of heaven (v. 8) down to earth (v. 9).

Interpretation A (v. 10-12c): Heaven rejoices (v. 12a-

c) because now salvation is accomplished (v. 10) for the righteous who overcome by the blood of the Lamb and who love God more than their own lives (v. 11).

Interpretation B (v. 12d-1): Woe to the inhabitants of the earth because the adversary is there.

Vision B (v. 13-17): The adversary is repeating the persecution of the woman here on earth (v. 13-15), but he is again thwarted (v. 16). The persecution continues (v. 17).

The two visions (v. 1-9, 13-17) are quite similar in content and language and parallel one another as follows (sections i and ii have close rhetorical parallels and so they are staggered to display this, sections iii and iv are parallels of subject and so they are simply stacked):

Vision A

Vision B

i. Dragon persecutes woman

1 And there appeared
a great wonder in heaven;
a woman clothed with the sun,
and the moon under her feet,
and upon her head
a crown of twelve stars:
2 And she being with child
cried, travailing in birth,
and pained to be delivered.
3 And there appeared
another wonder in heaven;
and behold
a great red dragon,
having seven heads
and ten horns,
and seven crowns
upon his heads.
4 And his tail
drew the third part
of the stars of heaven,
and did cast them
to the earth:

and the dragon stood
before the woman
which was ready
to be delivered,
for to devour her child
as soon as it was born.

13 And when the dragon saw
that he was cast
unto the earth,
he persecuted the woman
which brought forth
the man child.

ii. Woman delivered from Dragon by God

5 And she brought forth
a man child,
who was to rule all nations
with a rod of iron:
and her child was
caught up unto God,
and to his throne.

6 And the woman fled

into the wilderness,
where she hath a place
prepared of God,
that they should
feed her there
a thousand two hundred
and threescore days.

14 And to the woman
were given two wings
of a great eagle,
that she might fly
into the wilderness,
into her place,

where she is nourished
for a time, and times,
and half a time,
from the face of the serpent.

iii. Dragon thwarted by heavens and earth

7 And there was war
in heaven:
Michael and his angels
fought against the dragon;
and the dragon fought
and his angels,
8 And prevailed not;
neither was their place
found any more in heaven.

15 And the serpent
cast out of his mouth
water as a flood
after the woman,
that he might cause her
to be carried away
of the flood.

16 And the earth
helped the woman,
and the earth
opened her mouth,
and swallowed up the flood
which the dragon

cast out of his mouth.

iv. Dragon cast to earth/Dragon makes war on earth

9 And the great dragon
was cast out,
that old serpent,
called the Devil,
and Satan,
which deceiveth
the whole world:
he was cast out
into the earth,
and his angels
were cast out with him.

17 And the dragon was wroth
with the woman,
and went to make war
with the remnant of her seed,
which keep
the commandments of God,
and have the testimony
of Jesus Christ.

Note the parallel in section iv is not as clear as those of sections i, ii, and iii. Verse 9 has a conclusive ending with the adversary being cast out, while v. 17 is open ended. Why? Because the rest of the story and the conclusive ending are given in subsequent chapters. We see war on earth (cf. ch. 13-14), with the adversary and his minions ultimately being cast down yet again (cf. ch. 20).

Thus, the visions as recounted in this chapter show us the past (v. 1-9) and bring them us up to the present (v. 13-17), but the future material is dealt with in later chapters in greater detail. However, from the pattern given, we already know that what happened in v. 9 foreshadows what will happen in the future, just as v. 1-8 foreshadowed what would happen in v. 13-15.

Another interesting difference between the two visions merits some discussion. In the first vision we have the man child being born, but in the second vision there is no birth and the man child is not present, he is only referenced indirectly in identifying the woman. The man child was caught up to God's throne in v. 5, and so is absent from the second vision. This makes it clear the two visions are in fact chronological, the second is not simply a retelling of the first for emphasis.

The Inspired Version

The IV/JST makes substantial changes to the KJV in this chapter:

KJV

1 And there appeared
a great wonder in heaven;

a woman clothed with the sun,
and the moon under her feet,
and upon her head
a crown of twelve stars:
2 And she being with child
cried, travailing in birth,
and pained to be delivered.
3 And there appeared
another wonder in heaven;
and behold
a great red dragon,
having seven heads
and ten horns,
and seven crowns
upon his heads.
4 And his tail
drew the third part
of the stars of heaven,
and did cast them
to the earth:
and the dragon stood
before the woman
which was ready
to be delivered,
for to devour her child
as soon as it was born.
5 And she brought forth
a man child,
who was to rule all nations
with a rod of iron:
and her child was
caught up unto God,
and to his throne.

IV/JST

1 And there appeared
a great sign in heaven,
in the likeness
of things on the earth;
a woman clothed with the sun,
and the moon under her feet,
and upon her head
a crown of twelve stars.
2 And the woman being with child,
cried, travailing in birth,
and pained to be delivered.

3 And she brought forth
a man child,
who was to rule all nations
with a rod of iron;
and her child was
caught up unto God
and his throne.
4 And there appeared
another sign in heaven;
and behold,
a great red dragon,

6 And the woman fled
into the wilderness,
where she hath a place
prepared of God,
that they should
feed her there
a thousand two hundred
and threescore days.
7 And there was war
in heaven:
Michael and his angels
fought against the dragon;
and the dragon fought
and his angels,
8 And prevailed not;

neither was their place
found any more in heaven.
9 And the great dragon
was cast out,
that old serpent,
called the Devil,

having seven heads
and ten horns,
and seven crowns
upon his heads.
And his tail
drew the third part
of the stars of heaven,
and did cast them
to the earth.
And the dragon stood
before the woman
which was delivered,
ready to devour her child
after it was born.
5 And the woman fled
into the wilderness,
where she had a place
prepared of God,
that they should
feed her there
a thousand two hundred
and threescore years.
6 And there was war
in heaven;
Michael and his angels
fought against the dragon;
and the dragon
and his angels
fought against Michael;
7 And the dragon prevailed not
against Michael,
neither the child,
nor the woman
which was the church of God,
who had been delivered
of her pains,
and brought forth the kingdom
of our God and his Christ.
8 Neither was there place
found in heaven
for the great dragon,
who was cast out;
that old serpent
called the devil,

and Satan,
which deceiveth
the whole world:
he was cast out
into the earth,
and his angels
were cast out with him.
10 And I heard a loud voice
saying in heaven,
Now is come salvation,
and strength,
and the kingdom of our God,
and the power of his Christ:
for the accuser
of our brethren is cast down,
which accused them
before our God day and night.
11 And they overcame him
by the blood of the Lamb,
and by the word
of their testimony;
and they loved not
their lives
unto the death.
12 Therefore rejoice,
ye heavens,
and ye that dwell in them.

Woe to the inhabitants
of the earth
and of the sea!
for the devil is come down
unto you,
having great wrath,
because he knoweth
that he hath
but a short time.
13 And when the dragon saw
that he was cast
unto the earth,
he persecuted the woman

and also called Satan,
which deceiveth
the whole world;
he was cast out
into the earth;
and his angels
were cast out with him.
9 And I heard a loud voice
saying in heaven,
Now is come salvation,
and strength,
and the kingdom of our God,
and the power of his Christ;
10 For the accuser
of our brethren is cast down,
which accused them
before our God day and night.
11 For they have overcome him
by the blood of the Lamb,
and by the word
of their testimony;
for they loved not
their own lives,
but kept the testimony
even unto death.
Therefore, rejoice
O heavens,
and ye that dwell in them.
12 And after these things
I heard another voice saying,
Woe to the inhabitants
of the earth,
yea, and they who dwell
upon the islands of the sea!
for the devil is come down
unto you,
having great wrath,
because he knoweth
that he hath
but a short time.
13 For when the dragon saw
that he was cast
unto the earth,
he persecuted the woman

which brought forth
the man child.
14 And to the woman
were given two wings
of a great eagle,
that she might fly
into the wilderness,
into her place,
where she is nourished
for a time, and times,
and half a time,
from the face of the serpent.
15 And the serpent
cast out of his mouth
water as a flood
after the woman,
that he might cause her
to be carried away
of the flood.
16 And the earth
helped the woman,
and the earth
opened her mouth,
and swallowed up the flood
which the dragon
cast out of his mouth.
17 And the dragon was wroth
with the woman,
and went to make war
with the remnant of her seed,
which keep
the commandments of God,
and have the testimony
of Jesus Christ.

which brought forth
the man-child.
14 Therefore, to the woman
were given two wings
of a great eagle,
that she might flee
into the wilderness,
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and swalloweth up the flood
which the dragon
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17 Therefore, the dragon was wroth
with the woman,
and went to make war
with the remnant of her seed,
which keep
the commandments of God,
and have the testimony
of Jesus Christ.

The most significant changes are the additions of new text which interpret the otherwise obscure symbols of the woman and man child, and also make it plain the woes in v. 12 are a second interpretive statement.

Comments on Revelation 12

¹ And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: ² And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

³ And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. ⁴ And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

⁵ And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. ⁶ And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

⁷ And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, ⁸ And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

v1-9 The first vision. The adversary lies in wait (v. 3-4) to destroy the woman's child (v. 1-2, 5), but is thwarted as God takes her away and sustains her (v. 6). This causes war to break out in heaven with Michael and his angels fighting the adversary and his angels (v. 7). The adversary gets thrown out of heaven (v. 8) down to earth (v. 9).

v1-6 In these verses we have a woman, a man child, and a dragon. The dragon is easily identified with the adversary, but the woman and man child are not easily identified in the KJV. However, the IV/JST emends the text significantly and states:

And the dragon prevailed not against Michael, neither the child, nor the woman which was the church of God, who had been delivered of her pains, and brought forth the kingdom of our God and his Christ. (v. 7 of IV)

The woman is the "church of God", and in the Greek the "church" is the "ecclesia" or the "out-called" of God, meaning the people of the church, not the church building or ecclesiastical bureaucracy. The symbolic figure of the woman is probably drawn from Gen. 3:16.

The ecclesia brings forth the man child, which is "the kingdom of our God and his Christ". When we read this sentence it is ambiguous as to whether it is saying:

The ecclesia brings forth the kingdom which is of both God and Christ,

or

The ecclesia brings forth the kingdom of God and it also brings forth Christ.

Fortunately, v. 10 interprets what is meant here and indicates it is the latter because it is the "kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ" that is come in, so it isn't the kingdom of both God and Christ.

But how could the ecclesia bring forth the kingdom of God and the power of His Messiah? When we put it into the context of the War in Heaven, which is the context of v. 1-9, it is more plain to see what is being referred to here. Jesus Christ is the ante-mortal Lord of Hosts, Lord of what Hosts? The Hosts of Heaven, which sustained him as their Savior. So, in the War in Heaven those people called of God, the ecclesia, sustained God's plan which then appointed the Lord to be the Messiah and established the kingdom of God in earth and heaven.

The symbols employed here are derived from preceding scripture: for the woman see Gen. 3:16, for the man child as the kingdom of God see Dan. 12:1-12, Isa. 66:7, Matt. 25:1, John 16:21, D&C 5:14, D&C 86:3; and the man child as Messiah see Isa. 11:1-4, Isa. 26:17-18, Micah 5:3.

v1 The woman is characterized as clothed with the sun, or in other words being bathed in brilliant celestial light, as heavenly beings are commonly described in the Scriptures. Having the moon under her feet indicates she is above the moon, the lesser light. And we would assume the twelve stars represent the twelve tribes of Israel and therefore the Abrahamic covenant.

The woman is variously interpreted as Eve and Mary, mother of Jesus. The symbolic connection to these prominent mothers in human history is obvious. But, if either of them are intended to be the primary person being presented, then why didn't John just identify them as such. It is safe to conclude it is because that was not his intent.

v2 Pre-mortal spirits were eager to come down to earth, cf. Job 38:4-7, also cp. D&C 138:56, Abr. 3:22-25.

v3 Regarding the description of the dragon, the Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible (1871) by Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown states:

the color of the dragon implies his fiery rage as a murderer from the beginning. His representative, the beast, corresponds, having seven heads and ten horns (the number of horns on the fourth beast of Dan. 7:7; Rev. 13:1). But there, ten crowns are on the ten horns (for before the end, the fourth empire is divided into ten kingdoms); here, seven crowns (rather, "diadems," Greek, "diademata," not stephanoi, "wreaths") are upon his seven heads. In Dan. 7:4-7 the Antichristian powers up to Christ's second coming are represented by four beasts, which have among them seven heads, that is, the first, second, and fourth beasts having one head each, the third, four heads. His universal dominion as prince of this fallen world is implied by the seven diadems (contrast the "many diadems on Christ's head," Rev. 19:12, when coming to destroy him and his), the caricature of the seven Spirits of God. His worldly instruments of power are marked by the ten horns, ten being the number of the world. It marks his self-contradictions that he and the beast bear both the number seven (the divine number) and ten (the world number).

Discerning the intended meaning of these numbers and symbols is problematic. The explanation above is as good as any.

v5 "with a rod of iron", Nephi equates the iron rod with the word of God in 1 Ne. 11:25. Ruling with word of God is a typical messianic attribute, cf. Isa. 11:4, Ps. 2:9.

v6 The woman is separated from the dragon prior to the War in Heaven, launched by Michael in the subsequent verse, presumably for her own protection. The 1260 days adds up to roughly 3.5 years, the same number used under similar, albeit earthly, circumstances in v. 14. As 3.5 is half of 7, the divine number, one would assume the symbolic message is that the dragon's success in forcing the woman to flee is imperfect and transient and therefore doomed to come to an end.

The IV/JST changes the "days" to "years", and it is not

clear why. As this vision is relating to the War in Heaven, it seems earthly units of time would be largely meaningless. Regardless of how long the woman was forced to flee, the dragon's "success" was fleeting and insubstantial, and he was summarily ejected from heaven.

v7-9 The hostility necessitating the woman's flight precipitates retaliation against the dragon and his angels, and so war breaks out (v. 7). The dragon and his angels lose, and so they are ejected from heaven (v. 8), cast down to earth to become the adversaries of mankind (v. 9).

As an aside, John Milton in Paradise Lost ([book 6](#)), has a War in Heaven scene wherein a literal war takes place with arms and siege engines.

¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. ¹¹ And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. ¹² Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them.

v10-12c The interpretation of the first vision in v. 1-9. Salvation is accomplished (v. 10) for the righteous who overcome by the blood of the Lamb and who love God more than their own lives (v. 11), so heaven rejoices (v. 12a-c).

v10 The praise given by the loud voice forms a nice couplet:

Now is come salvation,
and strength,
and the kingdom of our God,
and the power of his Christ.

^{12d} Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

v12d-1 The interpretation of the second vision. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth because the adversary is there.

¹³ And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. ¹⁴ And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished

for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. ¹⁵ And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

¹⁶ And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

¹⁷ And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

v13-17 The second vision. The adversary is repeating the persecution of the woman here on earth (v. 13-15), but he is again thwarted (v. 16). The persecution of the saints continues (v. 17).

v14 "two wings of a great eagle...from the face of the serpent", the symbolism associated with an eagle is that of being high up above your enemies, out of their reach, or having power over them, cp. Isa. 46:11, Jer. 48:40. As the serpent is low down on the ground, it cannot harm the eagle flying high overhead.

I would assume this is speaking with respect to the Church of the Firstborn, the righteous dead who inherit celestial glory, as opposed to any kind of earthly Church. The earthly Church has come and gone over time with apostasy and so Satan has some degree of power over that if he can undermine all of the individuals within the Church. What Satan no longer has influence over is that which is in heaven.

"a time, and times, and half a time", i.e., 3.5 years, cp. Dan. 12:7 where this is the amount of time of the abomination of desolation, also cp. Dan. 12:11. Unlike v. 6, in this case we are dealing with an earthly setting, so we would be more prone to read this literally. But, if this vision is dealing with all of the 6000 years of the earth's existence prior to the Millennium wherein Satan can run amok, it doesn't seem likely that it would be commenting on only 3.5 out of those 6000 years.

Rather, I would read this similarly to v. 6 and assume it is symbolic of the adversary having success on earth to the point where he forces the woman to once again flee to a safe place, but the success is transient. We know from the Scriptures that it is only rarely that Zion is established on the earth, rather Satan typically holds great sway over the masses of men and thus the Church is often an unpopular minority.

v15-16 The dragon is thwarted again, this time by the earth. Symbolically speaking, in v. 7-9 we see the heavens rejecting Satan, now the earth rejects him as well. His actions cause all of God's creations to turn against him. This also shows that Satan's activities on the earth do not go unchecked. He serves his purpose as adversary, but he is not permitted to harm the woman.

For a more literal approach, the flood imagery is might be derivative of Isaiah as he compares the invading Assyrian armies to the image of a flooding river, cf. Isa. 8:6-8, Isa. 28:15-17. Subsequent chapters describe huge armies besieging Jerusalem (i.e., the flood) in a very literal fashion, and those armies being struck by plagues and natural disasters (i.e., swallowed by the earth). But, again, as noted in the comments on v. 14 above, if we forward such a literal reading then we are assuming the second vision is addressing a very narrow time frame.

v17 As the woman has been delivered from the dragon by being put out of his reach in v. 14, he instead turns his efforts to the "remnant of her seed". As the woman represents the ecclesia, a body of believers, I would assume that if the ecclesia is put out of the dragon's reach, then that this means is that he shifts his focus to targeting faithful individuals who keep the commandments and have a testimony of Christ.

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