

Understanding Revelation – Topic 18

War on God's Woman

**The true church through the
Christian era and the struggle
for religious freedom**

An exposition of Revelation Chapter 12

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Introduction

The latter part of the Book of Revelation concentrates on the final stages of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. Chapters 12-15 describe in detail the conflict of the church with the powers known as *the dragon*, *the beast*, and *the image to the beast*. Chapters 16 -19 describe the judgment of God upon these powers and their supporters.

The Woman

Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland (crown) of twelve stars. Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. Revelation 12:1-2

There are two women who are presented in the prophecies of the book of Revelation. . The great sign in this instance, the wonder that the prophet sees, is located in the sky. The fact that it is associated with the sun and the moon indicates that this is a symbolic prophecy. These symbols are derived from the Old Testament, where the two symbolic women referred to represent Babylon and Jerusalem each of which symbolizes a church.

I have likened the daughter of Zion to a lovely and delicate woman. Jeremiah 6:2

Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon... Isaiah 47:1

The two symbolic women in the book of Revelation likewise represent *Jerusalem* (spiritual Jerusalem, the church of God of Revelation 12) and the *harlot* (spiritual Babylon, the church of Satan of Revelation 17) because this book is based on the Old Testament.

The apostle Paul also referred to God's church as a woman:

For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. 2 Corinthians 11:2

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Ephesians 5:31-32

Clothed with the sun

In Revelation 12 the woman is portrayed as being covered in glorious attire, *clothed with the sun*. This garment represents the righteousness of Christ. The prophet Malachi likens Christ to *the SUN of righteousness*.

But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings.... Malachi 4:2

God's people are not seen by heaven in their own sinful attire. God sees them through the merits of Christ who is both their substitute and their righteousness.

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Corinthians 5:21

The moon under her feet

The woman is standing on the moon, which represents the church's foundation.

While the sun represents Christ, the moon is the prime object that reflects the light of the sun. In the realm of Christian faith what reflects Jesus Christ and is therefore the foundation for the Christian church are the Old Testament scriptures. They are a reflection of Christ. This fact is emphasized in the hymn

The church has one foundation, 'tis Jesus Christ her Lord...¹

Jesus said,

...these are they which testify (or bear witness) of me. John 5:39.

...all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me. Luke 24:44

The Old and New Testaments linked

The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed.
The New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.

The Old Testament is the New Testament contained.
The New Testament is the Old Testament explained.

The Old Testament is the New Testament enfolded.
The New Testament is the Old Testament unfolded.

The Old Testament is the New Testament founded
The New Testament is the Old Testament sounded.

The Old Testament is the New Testament instilled.
The New Testament is the Old Testament fulfilled.

The Old Testament in the New Testament is latent.
The New Testament in the Old Testament is patent.

The Old Testament is the New Testament in hope.
The New Testament is the Old Testament in scope.

One Old Testament description of the church of God corresponds with the symbolism of Revelation 12:

Who is she who looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, awesome as an army with banners? Song of Solomon 6:10

An incorrect interpretation

The Roman Catholic Church claims that the woman of Revelation 12 represents the Virgin Mary at the birth of Jesus. However in verses 5-6 of the chapter it states that after the child was born he was caught up to God's throne while the woman fled into the wilderness for 1260 days. Joseph and Mary, after the birth of Christ, fled with him to Egypt, not to the wilderness, and returned with the child to Nazareth less than one year

¹ Samuel J. Stone, 1866

later.² Rather, this woman represents the church of God in all ages, in both Old and New Testament periods.

This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us. Acts 7:38

The Hebrews while in the wilderness and at Mt Sinai were a part of the Old Testament church.

Crown of twelve stars

The woman has on her head a *garland* (crown) of *twelve stars*. Stars represent leaders (Revelation 1:20; Daniel 12:13) and crowns imply rulership. The number twelve is consistently associated in Scripture with church government: its authority and organization. The pre-flood church, from Adam to Noah, was led by twelve patriarchs, if Shem and Japheth are included (Genesis 5). The post-flood church was also led by at least twelve patriarchs from Shem to Jacob. The church in the Sinai wilderness consisted of twelve tribes.³ The church in the time of the Judges of Israel was led by twelve judges. The Old Testament church priesthood consisted of twenty-four courses, a number that is twice twelve.⁴ The New Testament church was led by twelve apostles. The final remnant church, the translated church, is symbolized by the number 144,000 which is emphasized by the multiple of twelve times twelve.⁵

Labouring to give birth

Then being with child, she cried out in labour and in pain to give birth. v2

This is a dramatic representation of God's church awaiting the coming of the Messiah. Ever since Eve gave birth to Cain, God's people have waited and longed for the Deliverer. Scripture gives typical instances of their waiting. When the infant Jesus was brought to the Temple to be dedicated there were two people who were waiting with great longing for the Messiah. One was Simeon:

And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel."

² Matthew 2:13-23

³ The church in the Sinai wilderness was actually comprised of 13 tribes, but they were always referred to as twelve tribes.

⁴ 1 Chronicles 24:1-5.

⁵ Revelation 7:1-4; 14:1-5.

And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against." Luke 2:25-34

Another was the prophetess Anna:

Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. Luke 2:36-38

The man child

And she bore a male Child...

This was in fulfillment of the four-thousand-year old prophecy given to Adam and Eve that their seed, the off-spring of the woman, would bruise the serpent's head.

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel. Genesis 3:15

In referring to this prediction the Apostle Paul used the expression *thy seed, which is Christ*. (Galatians 3:16) The Revelator by-passes the thirty-three years of Jesus' life and emphasizes just two events. The first was His ascension to God's throne.

...her Child was caught up to God and to his throne. v5

Forty days after Jesus' resurrection,

...He was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. Acts 1:9

Enoch and Elijah were also *caught up to God*, having been translated, but this man was caught up *to his throne*. The only man associated with God's throne is *the Man Christ Jesus* (I Timothy 2:5).

...who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron...

The second event is Christ's Second Advent. He would *rule all nations with a rod of iron*. This expression is drawn from Psalm 2:1-9 where it was predicted that the Messiah would ultimately destroy his enemies.

You will break them with a rod of iron; you will dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Psalm 2:9

This prediction will be fulfilled at Christ's return.

Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. Revelation 19:15.

The Christ child, who was born in a manger, will one day destroy the nations.

The dragon

Another symbol is introduced in Verse 3:

And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. v3

Here is symbolized a power that is to influence mankind until the final conflict. The first point of identification is found in the next verse.

His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. v4

This power would attempt to destroy Jesus Christ at His birth. That attempt was in fact made by Herod the Great.

Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Matthew 2:16

Herod was crowned king of Judea by the Romans. He was also a Roman governor. We can conclude therefore, that the dragon represents Imperial Rome. The dragon had *seven heads and ten horns*. The seven heads are discussed in Revelation 17, which will be covered in Topic 29.

Seven diadems

The dragon had *seven diadems (crowns) on his heads*. Diadems denote rulership, indicating that this particular dragon power appears when the heads are ruling, but not the horns. Revelation 17 reveals that the seven heads are kingdoms - empires - which reign successively one after the other. The ten horns however are contemporaneous, that is, they all reign concurrently. The crowns on the heads therefore suggest that when the dragon is brought into the picture at the birth of Christ, one of the heads must have already been reigning. Clearly that head was Imperial Rome.

Ten horns

What then do the ten horns represent? According to Daniel 7 they represent the ten kingdoms of Western Europe into which Western Rome was ultimately divided (Daniel 7:7, 24). The ten horns are mentioned ten times in the books of Daniel and Revelation and they always represent, initially, the ten divisions of Western Europe. Therefore Western Europe must form a part of the dragon's power.



Figure 1: Ten divisions of Western Europe⁶

We will be repeatedly confronted with the dragon power in the latter chapters of Revelation. It is therefore important to understand these details so that we can correctly identify who the dragon power represents in the final chapters.

The dragon is red in colour. Red in Scripture denotes sinfulness - *though your sins be as scarlet...* (Isaiah 1:18). Imperial Rome was the enemy of God. It is described in Scripture as *an abomination* (Matthew 24:15).

One of the standards of Imperial Rome was a dragon.

*The pagan Romans used the image of the dragon on their standards as well as the eagle. These dragon standards were red.*⁷

⁶ Map courtesy of *The Prophetic Code*. Used with permission

⁷ Adam Clarke, *The New Testament, Commentary and Critical Notes* (New York: A Paul, 1823), 925.

Another ancient writer, Prudentius, tells how the Roman soldiers under Constantine substituted the symbol of the cross in place of the symbol of the dragon.

Instead of the dragon flags, which they carried, waved about with the wind, they brought forward the illustrious wood (referring to the cross) which subdued the dragon...⁸

This is further evidence that the dragon power was Imperial Rome. In about 600 BC the prophet Ezekiel described Egypt as *the great monster* (or dragon).

Behold, I am against you, O Pharaoh king of Egypt, O great monster who lies in the midst of his rivers, who has said, 'My River is my own; I have made it for myself.' Ezekiel 29:3

Later, Imperial Rome occupied Egypt and became the dragon. The Egyptian dragon tried to destroy the child Moses, Israel's deliverer, soon after his birth.⁹ Likewise, the Roman dragon attempted to destroy the deliverer of Spiritual Israel, Jesus Christ, soon after His birth.

A destructive tail

His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven...

We have already stated above that stars represent leaders. In Israel's system of government there were three elements of power: the king, the Sanhedrin and the priesthood. When Rome overran Judea, it removed Israel's kingly power, and in that sense it drew away a third part of the stars of heaven. The word *drew* means to *drag down*. This was also a fulfillment of Daniel's prediction concerning the Little Horn:

And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them. Daniel 8:10

The question should now be asked as to why there was such animosity on the part of Imperial Rome towards an innocent infant. This indicates that a power greater than Rome was involved. The invisible influence behind Rome was Satan, who is also symbolized as a dragon.

Other names for the dragon

So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. v9

Satan is the invisible dragon: Imperial Rome was the visible one. Satan is described here by a quartet of terms: *dragon, old serpent, devil* and *Satan*. What do all these represent? The *dragon* presents him as a persecutor and destroyer. The *old serpent* descriptor speaks to his cunning and deception. The term *Devil* indicates that he is a slanderer and a liar (John. 8:44). The fourth term, *Satan*, implies an adversary, especially in the setting of a law court. He is the *accuser of the brethren*. But why

⁸ Ibid. 928. (quoting the 4th century Roman poet, Aurelius Clemens Prudentius.)

⁹ Exodus 1:7-22.

should Satan, Lucifer, seek the life of this innocent infant? To answer this we must go back to the origin of the conflict.

War in heaven

And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought. v7

The idea that heaven, the perfect paradise, is where war began seems a mystery to us now. The contestants were Michael and Lucifer. Michael was the archangel (Jude 9): the word *archangel* means *chief angel*. The name *Michael* means *who is like God*. This must therefore refer to Jesus Christ, who is the express image of His (the Father's) Person (Hebrews 1:3). At the Second Advent of Christ, the voice of the archangel raises the dead (1 Thess 4:16) and we know that the only voice that raises the dead is the voice of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His (Christ's) voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. John 5:28-29

Michael must therefore be the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Lucifer, we know, is Satan (Isaiah 14:12-21).

The war fought in heaven was an angelic war so there was no destruction of life. It was a struggle for supremacy, for control. The Creator could have put Lucifer out of action in a flash, but he permitted His heavenly messengers to strive for the mastery. One side fought on God's side, the other fought on Lucifer's. God's purpose in permitting this was to enable His angels to demonstrate where their loyalty lay. It was a public declaration of their allegiance. God calls for public displays of loyalty to His cause.

Jesus declared:

For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels. Luke 9:26.

God will never accept neutrality. Any attempt to 'sit on the fence' is counted as a denial of Christ.¹⁰

The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches... Revelation 1:20

Stars can also represent angels.

...a third of the stars of heaven...

In the heavenly conflict, Satan's angelic hosts were outnumbered. They comprised only a third of the angelic host. Revelation 12:7 therefore has a second application to that given above. It confirms that Satan – the invisible dragon - must have been successful in deceiving a third of the multiplied millions of angelic beings and that they were cast out of heaven with him.

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1948), 3:281.

And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day. Jude 6

For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment... 2 Peter 2:4

What a devastating blow to the reputation of the Godhead. *War in heaven!* Heaven is where both sin and war began. It remains an awful enigma.

But they did not prevail...

The problem of evil is an unfathomable mystery and the only satisfactory explanation is found in the Word of God.¹¹ However in the great war in heaven the hosts of evil *did not prevail* (v8). Satan and his angels were defeated. Michael, being co-Creator with God the Father would naturally be the victor because Lucifer and his fellow angels are created beings. Jesus Christ is always the victor over Satan. This is why, in our personal warfare with the powers of evil, if we have Christ with us we also will be victorious.

Satan is cast out

Altogether there will be four castings out of Satan. The third casting out of Satan will be when he is cast into *the bottomless pit* and this is described in Revelation 20:1-3. The fourth and final expulsion will occur when Satan is cast into the lake of fire of Revelation 20:10, resulting in his final destruction. These two expulsions will be addressed in a subsequent topic.

In Revelation 12:7-12 the first two expulsions are presented as follows.

1. From heaven

...nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. v8

The fallen angels originally dwelt in the third heaven, the dwelling place of God. They were messengers of God who by their rebellion had forfeited their right to remain and had therefore lost their first estate. Satan could no longer return to his original position as covering cherub.

This first expulsion of Satan and his angels was to the place called *hell*, or *tartarus*.

*For if God did not spare the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell...
2 Peter 2:4 (Greek: tartarus)*

Tartarus is not this earth.¹² Lucifer and his angels were cast out of heaven before this earth was created. (In Eden after the creation of this earth, he deceived Eve, indicating he had fallen prior to this time).

¹¹ For an in-depth study of *The Origin of Evil*, refer to the following: A.P. Cooke, *Why do the Innocent Suffer?* (Sydney: Self-published, 1985), ; Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1898), 492-504; Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1958), 33-34.

¹² The Greek word *Tartarus* is used only once in the Bible and it appears to be the abode of evil spirits.

Scripture tells us that *tartarus* is a place of *chains of darkness* (I Pet 2:4) of *everlasting chains under darkness* (Jude 6). Darkness is the absence of light, indicating that *tartarus* is a place outside the presence of God. It was therefore not Eden, nor could it apply to other worlds, for they are all realms of light where God's presence is, as demonstrated in Genesis Chapter 2. We suggest that *tartarus* must be outer space, the area between the worlds. This is a place of darkness. Perhaps it was from outer space that Satan had access to this earth and to other worlds.

2. To earth

...he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. v9

Here we have the second expulsion of Satan. Although Lucifer could never return to heaven to take up his original position as covering cherub, the Scriptures indicate that after the first casting out he continued to return to Heaven as earth's representative. From time to time the leaders of other worlds assemble in council before God (Job 1:6-7; 2:1). When Satan became *the prince of this world* (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) by seducing Adam and Eve, he attended these heavenly councils in the role of the representative of this world. In Eden Lucifer usurped Adam's position as leader of this world. Before the representatives of the Universe he acted the part of *the accuser of the brethren* (Job 1:8-11; 2:3,5). The second casting out of Satan was from these councils.

...for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. v10

The question now arises as to how and when Satan was cast out from these councils and on what grounds. The answer is found in the first part of Verse 10:

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come..."

Notice the phrase, *Now salvation* (victory)...*has come*. The victory, or salvation, was accomplished at Calvary. When Christ expired upon the cross he sealed the doom of Satan.

...He Himself likewise shared in the same (flesh and blood) that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. Hebrews 2:14.

Previously Jesus had declared

"Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." This He said, signifying by what death He would die. John 12:31-33

Let us now consider how, by His death, Jesus sealed Satan's doom. There is an old saying: 'Give a fool enough rope and he'll hang himself'. Jesus did exactly that. He gave Satan enough scope for him to overreach himself. Jesus allowed Satan to vent his implacable hatred upon Him, and the enthralled universe beheld the incredible scene. They witnessed the amazing love of Christ, and on the other hand, the diabolical cruelty and hatred of Satan. They beheld Jesus in all His innocence, love and compassion, suffering under the fierce and frenzied onslaught of Satan.

The pent-up fires of envy and malice, hatred and revenge, burst forth on Calvary against the Son of God, while all Heaven gazed upon the scene in silent horror.¹³

At Calvary Jesus unmasked the character of Satan. At the same time, Calvary revealed Jesus as the most loving and lovable of men. As the nails were thrust through His quivering flesh, they heard His prayer, *Father forgive them, for they do not know what they do* (Luke 23:34). By His suffering on behalf of others, by His selflessness, Christ drew the whole universe to Himself.

And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples unto myself.
John 12:32

The word *peoples* is not in the original text. The word *all* encompasses the universe.

Any residual questions which remained in the minds of the unfallen beings in relation to Satan's rebellion were removed. They now knew that God was love and Satan was desperately spreading erroneous beliefs. Any doubts regarding the character of the Godhead were dissolved. In this situation the announcement was made:

Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them!... v12

Not only did salvation come at the cross, but also *strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ...* (v10). This means that as a result of Calvary, strength to successfully resist Satan was now available to the believer.

...and the kingdom of our God...

Calvary made God's kingdom sure. God's law was vindicated. God's character was revealed as righteous. Justice and mercy were seen as the foundation of His throne.

...and the power of his Christ...

The Greek word for power is *exousia* meaning *authority*. Now the authority of Christ was established. Because of Satan's insinuations, Christ's authority had been under question. The war in heaven had been over the question of authority, but now as a result of Calvary, Jesus' authority was fully established and His authority as Saviour, Priest, and King was no longer under question. At the close of His earthly ministry Jesus declared,

.... All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Matthew 28:18

Ever since Satan usurped Adam's position as vice-regent of this world, he had been the accuser before the heavenly councils.

...the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night...
Revelation 12:10

For four thousand years Satan had lured the saints into sin and had then accused them before heaven. Undoubtedly he also accused God of being unjust by expecting human beings to keep His purportedly unjust law.

¹³ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* 501.

Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Boise, ID.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1962), 168.

Overcoming Satan

By the power of Christ's blood

And they overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb...

Satan, that mighty angelic being, can be overcome and he is overcome in two ways: The first is *by the blood of the Lamb*, that is, on the basis of Christ's shed blood. Scripture employs fifteen different phrases to emphasize the power of the blood of Christ. There is power in the blood. Christ's blood is efficacious because it:

- washes away our sins (Revelation 1:5)
- cleanses us from all sin (I John 1:7)
- makes our spiritual garments white (Revelation 7:14)
- propitiates, or covers, our sins (Romans 3:25)
- gives remission for our sins (Hebrews 9:22)
- purges the conscience (Hebrews 9:14)
- justifies the believer (Romans 5:9)
- gives peace to the guilty (Colossians 5:20)
- brings us near to God (Ephesians 2:13)
- redeems us, or buys us back (Colossians 1:14; Ephesians 1:7)
- gives life (John 6:54)
- purchases the church of God (Acts 20:28)
- gives boldness to enter into God's presence (Hebrews 10:19)
- makes us perfect to do His will (Hebrews 13:20-21)
- overcomes Satan. (Revelation 12:11)

No wonder the hymn says,

*There is ... wonder working power, in the precious blood of the Lamb.*¹⁴

¹⁴ Lewis E. Jones, *Power in the Blood*, 1899.

By the power of personal testimony

...and by the word of their testimony...

The second way in which Satan can be overcome is *by the word of their testimony*. That is, on the basis of a Christian's testimony. One's personal witness for Christ and the gospel can defeat Satan.

...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation. Romans 10:9-10

Testifying of the love and power of Christ is vital for the Christian. As one author wrote:

This is what everyone can do whose heart has been touched by the grace of God. This is the witness for which our Lord calls, and for want of which the world is perishing. The gospel is to be presented, not as a lifeless theory, but as a living force to change the life. God would have His servants bear testimony to the fact that through His grace men may possess Christ's likeness of character and may rejoice in the assurance of His great love.¹⁵

...and they did not love their lives to the death. v11

As a result of their testimony many Christians came under the threat of death, but their love for Christ was such that self-preservation had no place in their thinking. Serenely they faced the lions and the fiery stake. What a victory for Christ they presented! What a conquest over the evil one! They *overcame him by the word of their testimony*.

Satan's doom is sealed

Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them!...

This refers to the intelligent beings of unfallen worlds.¹⁶ The beings of other worlds rejoice because Satan's activities as accuser have been curbed. Until Calvary Satan had access to the heavenly councils, but after Calvary access was no longer available. He has been exposed and his doom is sealed. The author of *Desire of Ages* explains:

Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted. Whatever attitude he might assume, he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ's brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ellen G White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1905), 99.

¹⁶ Cooke, A.P. *Are Other Worlds Inhabited?* In A.P. Cooke, *New heaven, New Earth, New Jerusalem – All things New*, (self-published 2011, Sydney).

¹⁷ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1898), 761.

...Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time. v12

Recognising that his true nature has been exposed, Satan now vents his fury (*wrath*) upon the human race. He knows he has but a short time. Compared with eternity the time period until the Second Advent is short. Knowing his doom is sealed, he determines that he will take as many as possible to destruction with him, in particular God's Woman (the Church).

War on God's Woman

Persecution

...he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. v13

This prediction was fulfilled first by the Jews, who were relentless in their persecution of the early Christians. The synagogues were called *fountains of persecution*, because from them the persecution was organized and inspired.

Second, the prediction was fulfilled by the pagans, especially Pagan Rome. It is claimed that two and a half million Christians were martyred for their faith in the first century of the Christian era. The Egyptians, Persians and other pagan people were also involved, but primarily it was at the hand of Pagan Rome. Every apostle except John was martyred, but only because he was delivered by God from a cauldron of boiling oil. Jesus had warned His followers about persecution.

In the world you will have trouble, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. John 16:33

Internal attacks

Persecution from Rome continued until the time of Constantine the Great, around 320 AD. By this time it had become counterproductive so Satan changed his tactics. Instead of attacking from without, he determined to attack the Woman (church) from within. Under a Christian guise, he entered the church and led it into apostasy. This fulfilled the great prediction in the book of Thessalonians which had forecast the rise of the *man of sin*.

*Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.
2 Thessalonians 2:3-4*

Protestant scholars in the past and many still today have been clear that this prediction has been fulfilled by none other than the Church of Rome. This apostate entity encompassed the majority of the professed church. It broke away from the true faith and by combining with political powers obtained political supremacy and began to dominate the world of the day. In 538 AD, persecution commenced against those who held to the true faith. This led to the fulfillment of Revelation 12:14.

The Woman flees

But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. v14

In the Old Testament ancient Egypt, which was also called *the dragon*, pursued ancient Israel into the wilderness of Sinai. Israel was pictured as being carried out of Egypt on eagle's wings (Exodus 19:1-4). So it was with spiritual Israel. When Catholic dominance began, true believers were pursued by the dragon - the political agencies of the Papacy - and the church is represented as flying on eagle's wings into the wilderness. This period of persecution began in 538 AD under Justinian, the emperor of Eastern Rome. Procopius, the historian who followed the Roman armies declared:

In his zeal to gather all men into one Christian doctrine, he (Justinian) recklessly killed all who dissented, and this too he did in the name of piety. For he did not call it homicide, when those who perished happened to be of a belief different from his own.¹⁸

Now the churches of these so-called heretics, especially those belonging to the Arian dissenters, were almost incredibly wealthy.

Agents were sent everywhere to force whomever they chanced upon to renounce the faith of their fathers... Thus many perished at the hands of the persecuting faction... but most of them by far quitted the land of their fathers, and fled the country... and thenceforth the whole Roman Empire was a scene of massacre and flight.¹⁹

John Chapman, Roman Catholic scholar, says of Justinian:

He felt himself to be the vice-regent of the Almighty, to rule the world and bring all to the service of Christ. His wars were holy wars. In later centuries, a Byzantine battle began like a church ceremony. Even in the sixth century every enterprise was consecrated by religion.

He was well aware that judicious persecution is a great help to conversion! He strengthened the existing laws against pagans, Jews and heretics... Many were burnt at Constantinople after the Emperor had made vain attempts to convert them... Other heretics were given three months grace. All magistrates and soldiers had to swear they were Catholics.²⁰

¹⁸ Procopius, *Secret History of the Court of Justinian* (Kila MT: Kessinger Publishing (repub), 121-122

¹⁹ Ibid. 138-139.

²⁰ John Chapman, *Studies in the Early Papacy* (Kansas City KA: Sheed & Ward, 1928), 222.

Papal supremacy

Church historian Dr Summerbell says,

Justinian...enriched himself with the property of all 'heretics', that is non-Catholics, and gave all their churches to the Catholics; published edicts in 538 AD. compelling all to join the Catholic church in 90 days or leave the Empire and confiscated all their goods.²¹

538 AD was the date that commenced *the time, times, and half a time*, of Papal supremacy.

Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.
Revelation 12:6

Here we have clear evidence that the *time, times and half a time*, equals 1260 days, which represents 1260 years.²² These are two of the seven instances where this time period is mentioned in Bible prophecy.²³ It appears in both Daniel and Revelation, and wherever it is employed, a vital clue is provided by which to interpret prophecy. We need to beware of the Jesuit *futuristic* interpretation, which tries to destroy this identifying time period by giving it a literal 3½ year application at some time in the future.

A wilderness refuge

The woman flees *into the wilderness*. What does the *wilderness* represent? In the Old Testament, the wilderness referred to the uninhabited areas of the Sinai Peninsula. The Greek word used in Revelation 12:6, 14 is *eremos*. It refers to a forsaken desert or empty place, an uninhabited place. It represents a place of seclusion or obscurity. It is a place away from the public gaze, in the areas remote from the centers of civilization.

True Christian believers fled to such places because of the oppressive decrees of the Emperor Justinian which precipitated persecution and led to the setting up of the Bishop of Rome as the *Universal Bishop of the world, and the Corrector of Heretics*. True Christians were compelled to leave the empire *amid massacre and flight*.²⁴


²¹ Nicholas Summerbell, *History of the Christian Church* Office of the Christian Pulpit, 1873), 310-311.

²² The Year-Day principle of a day for a year in symbolic prophecy is employed in Ezekiel 4:6 and Numbers 14:34.

²³ Daniel 7:25; 12:7, Revelation 11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5.

²⁴ Christian Edwardson, *Facts of Faith* (Nashville TN: Southern Publishing Assn, 1943), 40-42.



Figure 2:  = Some of the areas in Europe where faithful, true believers resided during the Middle Ages.²⁵

Revelation 12:14 passage refers to the wilderness as *her place*. There was a place for the church of God in the wilderness, in the outlying areas, for 1260 years, a *place prepared by God*. The most famous refuge during those dark years was the area encompassing the Waldensian valleys amid the Cottian Alps, 30 miles west of Turin in northern Italy. Significantly this area was located in the centre of Papal territory. There the Lord had a place prepared for many of His people during those trying years. Some students of church history believe that at the time of the universal flood, when the surface of the earth was torn up and re-laid, the Creator bore in mind the future needs of His persecuted people. Certain areas were configured so that they could serve as places of refuge.

The Waldensian refuge was comprised of seven remarkable valleys. These constituted a natural fortress against invasion. One valley led into the other and finally within them was the seventh, a secret valley, accessible through a narrow, rocky canyon. In this valley was situated the College of the Barbs where young men were educated for the ministry.

The valleys were self-supporting. The soil was very fertile and provided sufficient food, including many trees which bore nuts which could be used for food. In the mountain soil were abundant quantities of slate which were used as building materials for Waldensian homes, many of which were hidden among the trees along the sides of the mountains.

²⁵ Map courtesy of www.free-extras.com. Accessed 9-7-2011.

Here for hundreds of years the Vaudois, as they were called, or Waldenses, resided, maintaining the true faith.²⁶

This territory was within the diocese of Milan, which for centuries was independent of the Roman See. Milan was closely connected with the Church of the East which had been founded by the apostles. For centuries the Christians of Milan withstood Papal influence. They kept the seventh-day Sabbath when Rome was keeping the first day. In fact, whenever Ambrose, the famous Archbishop of Milan, visited Rome it was his practice to observe Sunday in Rome, but in his home diocese of Milan, he observed the true Sabbath. The well known adage, *When in Rome do what Rome does* is credited to Ambrose in connection with his keeping of Sunday in Rome. This indicates that the diocese of Milan continued to hold to the true faith many years after Rome had apostatized (gone astray).²⁷

The Woman is fed

...that they should feed her there... v6

...where she is nourished... v14

What is the food or nourishment of the Christian? It is the Word of God which is likened to spiritual milk, to spiritual bread, and to spiritual meat.²⁸

The Waldenses

The Waldenses were nourished by the Word of God in those dark days. They translated the Bible from the uncorrupted manuscript of Lucian, the famous Syrian scholar of post-apostolic times, into their own tongue. The Waldensian Bible formed the link between Lucian and the Protestant Reformers. Having the Bible in their own language led to the Waldensians becoming strong Christians. When the rest of Europe was deprived of the Scriptures which were locked up in the Latin language that few could read, the Waldensians studied and understood the Word of God.

Student pastors, as they studied in the secret valley, were required to copy portions of Scripture by hand as part of their ministerial courses. They took these with them on their missionary journeys as they traveled two by two throughout Europe. The students were required to serve as missionaries for three years before they could serve as pastors in the valleys. Generally they traveled as merchants, minstrels or peddlers, moving unobtrusively among the people. Silently and secretly they distributed their copies of the precious Word.

The Waldenses kept the lamp of truth burning, though dimly, throughout Europe during the Dark Ages. Their work culminated in the great Protestant Reformation.²⁹

²⁶ The word *Vaudois* or *Waldenses* means *People of the Valleys*. An attempt has been made by the Church of Rome to identify the Waldenses as followers of Peter Waldo of Lyons, France. The word *Vaudois* or *Waldenses* means *People of the Valleys*. This has been an attempt to hide the truth that there were dissenters from the Papacy in the centuries before the Protestant Reformation. A more recent claim by Rome is that the existence of the Waldenses is a myth.

²⁷ Le Roy Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1954), 1:419.

²⁸ 1 Peter 2:2; John 6:51-52, 63; Hebrews 5:12-13.

²⁹ J.A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism* (London: Cassell and Co. Ltd., 1878), 1:23-32.

In their lifestyle the Waldenses exhibited a standard of moral purity which was in stark contrast to the average lifestyle of the time. The general populace lived in appalling ignorance, poverty, superstition, moral degradation and mental slavery. As one historian has stated, *It was the noonday of the Papacy but it was the midnight of the world*³⁰. The contrasting lifestyle of the Waldensians marked them as heretics and often led to their being arrested and martyred.³¹

We need to be wary of the current concept of the Middle Ages. Rome has invented a picture of that period which deceptively whitewashes history and hides the appalling lot of society under the Catholic yoke.³² Truly the Middle Ages were *the midnight of the world*. The Waldenses motto was *A light in the darkness*. So often however, the darkness was dispelled by a burning Waldensian martyr dying at the stake. They were the unsung heroes of the faith during the Dark Ages and with them, of course, were other heroic people who also helped to keep the light of Truth burning.³³

Floods of persecution

So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. v15

...the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. v16

In verses 14-16 the titles *dragon* and *serpent* are used interchangeably, indicating that the dragon and the serpent have the same identity.

Perhaps the reason for using the word *serpent* is that this creature represents deception, falsehood and cunning. In the Garden of Eden the serpent *beguiled Eve*. She was *deceived* by the serpent. The dragon title denotes ferocity and destructiveness. The reason the flood is pictured as coming out of the serpent's mouth is that the persecution was inspired by malicious propaganda, by campaigns of lies and deceit. Through the preaching of friars and priests, through the proclamations of popes and prelates, by false promises of pardon and paradise, the populace was inspired to mount great crusades against the saints of God in the wilderness regions.

Significance of the term *flood*

...water...like a flood.... v15

The Greek word here is *potomos* which means *flood, river, stream, water* (Dr Strong) or a *flood of water like a river* (Dr Dodderidge). This term derived from the Old Testament references the Euphrates River which was often described as *the flood*.

Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River (KJV: flood) in old times; and they served

³⁰ Ibid, 4:15.

³¹ Henry C Lea, *History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1922), 1:86-87.

³² Alfred Baudrillart, *The Catholic Church, the Renaissance and Protestantism* (London: K. Paulrübner & Co. Ltd., 1908), 182-184.

³³ Other groups that maintained the true faith were the Celtic church in Britain, the Albigenses in south-west France, the Hussites in Bohemia, the Paulicans of Armenia, the Pietists in Germany & the Ukraine and many other groups.

other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan.... Joshua 24:2-3

Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River (KJV: flood) and in Egypt. Serve the LORD! And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River (KJV: flood), or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. Joshua 24:14-15.

The same truth is brought to view in Jeremiah 46:6-8 and 47:2-3. In Daniel 9:26 the invasion by the Roman armies and the subsequent destruction of Jerusalem were predicted using the symbol of a flood. Daniel 12:6-7 also alludes to the river Euphrates. The Euphrates was the appointed boundary between ancient Israel and Babylon.

On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates". Genesis 15:18

When the snow on Mt. Ararat melted, the Euphrates often overflowed into the appointed territory of Israel. The prophets used this phenomenon to illustrate the invasion of Israel by her enemies from the north. The Holy Spirit used this flooding concept to illustrate the rising up of the church's enemies in an endeavor to destroy her. The term *Euphrates* is used similarly in the sixth trumpet of Revelation 9 and also in the sixth plague of Revelation 16:12.³⁴

During the 1260 years of Papal supremacy, as a result of the serpent's propaganda, *the waters* (or peoples) *where the harlot sits* (Revelation 17:15) rose up to sweep away the saints. Multitudes were inspired to mount crusades against those they termed as heretics. Victims of the crusades included:

- the Celtic Christians of Britain
- the non-Catholic Christians of Thrace (538 AD)
- the Ostrogoths in Italy (538 AD)
- the Waldenses in Northern Italy. Several crusades were mounted into their valleys by Catholic leaders
- the Albigenses in south and western France
- the Christians of the East
- The Irish Celtic Church - by Henry II of England with the support of the Papacy
- the Lollards, in England, followers of John Wycliffe
- Spanish Protestants at the time of Spanish Inquisition
- the Hussites, followers of John Huss in Bohemia
- German Protestants at the time of the Reformation
- Swiss Protestants in Reformation times (by Catholic authorities)

³⁴ See: A.P. Cooke, *The Drying up of the Great River Euphrates* (Sydney: Self-published, 2010),

- The majority of the Dutch population who were Protestant, by Phillip II of Spain
- English Protestants - by the Spanish Armada
- European Protestants during the 30 Years War
- French Protestants (Huguenots) in the St. Bartholomew massacre, by French Catholic kings. Huguenots were also persecuted in later years.
- the Scottish Covenanters -18,000 were killed by the pro-Catholic Stuart kings.

These crusades were symbolized by the flood which spewed out of the mouth of the dragon or serpent. It was an endeavor to sweep away God's people. Some claim that the water from the serpent's mouth represents the false teachings of evolution. However the events of Revelation 12:15-16 apply to the 1260 year period of 538-1798. Darwin and modern evolution commenced well after 1844, long after the close of this time period.

The *earth* helps the Woman

Literal applications

In response to the flood of persecution God intervened to aid his people.

But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. v16

It has been claimed that *the earth* represents the science of archaeology which uncovered the remains of lost civilizations and confirmed the Bible. But the science of archaeology did not start until around 1798, *the time of the end*. Modern archaeology started towards the end of the 19th Century and could certainly be a component in *the increase of knowledge* which the prophet Daniel had predicted.

The word *earth* is used six times in Revelation Chapter 12:

1. The dragon cast a third of the stars to the earth (v4)
2. The dragon (Satan) was cast to the earth (v9)
3. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth (v12)
4. The dragon saw he had been cast to the earth (v13)
5. The earth helped the woman (v16)
6. The earth opened her mouth (v16)

Other terms in this chapter, such as the *woman*, the *mouth of the serpent*, and the *flood* – are used symbolically. However the term *earth* appears to have both a literal and a symbolic application. God did employ the literal elements of the earth, the natural world, to deliver his saints from destruction during those dark years. He used the mountain fastnesses, isolated valleys, deep forests, secret caves, cloud and mist, wind and tempest, water and floods to protect and to deliver his people. The Waldenses, in one of their hymns, celebrated how God used the elements to deliver them from their foes.

Hymn of the Vaudois mountaineers

*For the strength of the hills we bless Thee,
Our God, our fathers' God!
Thou hast made thy children mighty
By the touch of the mountain sod.
Thou hast fixed our ark of refuge
Where the spoiler's feet ne'er trod
For the strength of the hills we bless Thee,
Our God, our fathers' God.
We are watchers of a beacon
Whose light must never die;
We are guardians of an altar
Midst the silence of the sky;
Thy rocks yield founts of courage,
Struck forth as by thy rod;
For the strength of the hills we bless Thee,
Our God, our fathers' God!*³⁵

On occasion, the literal elements of the earth were used strikingly by God. When one reads the gripping accounts of how the Scottish Covenanters were delivered from their pursuers, it is evident that God used mist, fogs and cloud to deliver them. When the Spanish Armada sailed against Protestant England, the purpose of which was to bring England back to the Catholic faith, it was wind and tempest that saved the country. Indisputably, the literal elements of the earth helped the *Woman*.

On Plymouth Hoe, beside the great statue of Sir Francis Drake there stands a smaller monument commemorating the defeat of the Armada. On the monument are the words,

Thou didst send Thy winds, and they were scattered.

Dr. Wylie in his portrayal of the Armada's destruction says:

*Even the Spaniards themselves confessed that the divine hand was upon them; that One looked forth at times from the storm cloud that pursued them, and troubled them. Christendom at large was solemnized: the ordinary course of events had been interrupted; the heavens had been bowed, and the great judge had descended upon the scene... The deliverance was a common one to the Protestant kingdoms. All shared in it with England, and each in turn took up this song of triumph... it seemed as if the days of Miriam with their judgments and songs of triumph, had returned, and that the Hebrew prophetess had lent her timbrel to England, that she might sing upon it the destruction of a mightier host than that of Egypt... England began the song as was meet, for around her isle had the Armada been led, a spectacle of doom; but soon, from beyond the German ocean, from the foot of the Alps, from the shores of Scotland, other voices were heard swelling the anthem, and saying, Sing ye to the Lord for he hath triumphed gloriously.*³⁶

³⁵ W.A. Spicer, *Beacon Lights of Prophecy* (Takoma Park, WA: Review and Herald Publishing Assn, 1935), 273.

³⁶ J.A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, 23:19.

When the few remaining galleons finally limped back to Spain, Phillip II lamented:

*I sent my ships to fight with men, not to combat the winds!*³⁷

God had intervened and used the winds to bring disaster to Rome's plans to overcome the people of God.

History also records how the Dutch Protestants were besieged by Spanish Catholic armies, and how winds, tides and floods intervened, enabling many of the Dutch to escape destruction.

Symbolic applications

Earth is the opposite of the sea (or *waters*) and in prophecy, waters symbolize multitudes, peoples, nations and tongues (Revelation 17:15) - highly populated areas. The earth, as the opposite of the sea, would therefore represent a sparsely populated area.

During the 1260 year period God's people resorted to sparsely populated areas to find protection. As we have previously noted, refuge was found in the Alpine Valleys of Northern Italy, the forest recesses of Bohemia, the extensive forest areas of south-west France and extending to the glens and dales of the Pyrenees. These natural fortresses also included isolated areas of Britain and the adjacent islands such as Iona and Lindisfarne.

Other areas of refuge for God's people included parts of Ethiopia cut off from papal intrusion by the Moslem conquests, and areas of the Ukraine and Southern Russia where German Christians called Pietists migrated fleeing opposition in the 17th century. In addition the Caucasus, Armenia and areas where the church of the East flourished were used. These areas were isolated from Papal influence by Arab and Turkish rule. The French Protestants (Huguenots) resorted to the remote mountain valleys of Southern France for worship and refuge from the fierce persecution of Catholic civil and religious leadership. These French believers in the wilderness regions were literally called *the Church in the desert*.³⁸

Finally, there were sparsely populated areas in the new land of America where the papal forces weren't dominant. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries America came into being as a land of freedom. That nation originated mainly with the Pilgrim Fathers who forsook England because of the religious intolerance of both the church and king.

In Scripture the term *earth* is also used to represent the rulers and inhabitants of the earth.³⁹ Bishop Ellicott, commenting on this Scripture, says:

*The earth is generally understood as some earthly power which is raised up to protect the church against persecution.*⁴⁰

³⁷ Garrett Mattingley, *The Armada* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1974), 338.

³⁸ Samuel Smiles, *The Huguenots in France* (London: Strahan and Co, 1873), 88.

³⁹ Jeremiah 22:9; Micah 1:2; Habakkuk 2:20.

⁴⁰ Charles J. Ellicott, *Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), on Revelation 12:15-16.

Earthly rulers did protect God's people throughout the 1260 years of persecution. The first one of note was the noble Theoderic, king of the Ostrogoths in the sixth century.⁴¹ Count Raymond of Toulouse was a noted protector of the Albigenses. The king and queen of Bohemia were protectors of John Huss and his followers. The Protestant princes of Germany protected Luther and his followers. Some of the independent city states of Germany protected the Anabaptists. Some cantons of Switzerland protected Zwingli and his followers. The city state of Geneva gave asylum to John Calvin and to French and British Protestants. Protestant England intermittently gave protection to other Protestants. William of Orange - *William the Silent* - was another outstanding champion of religious liberty who protected Dutch and German Protestants. Certain Dutch city states were also a refuge for British Independents such as the Pilgrim Fathers.

Gustaf Adolphus, King of Sweden, led the Protestant armies against the Catholic European powers in the Thirty Years War, in order to protect the Protestants. Oliver Cromwell, during the English Commonwealth, was a great protector of English dissenters. His army was composed mostly of Congregationalists and Baptists. He protected the people from the intolerant, pro-Catholic, Anglican Church. Cromwell was also a threat to the persecutors of the Waldenses of his day. Count Zinzendorf of Saxony was a protector of the Moravians who had fled from Roman Catholic persecution in their country.

Probably the greatest protector of all was the United States of America which, by legislating civil and religious liberty, became the home of the oppressed. Some would also acknowledge the French Revolution which, by overthrowing the Catholic Church and the feudal system and by establishing the principles of freedom, equality and fraternity, dramatically changed the attitude of much of the world towards religious oppression.

Thus, in a symbolic sense also, the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the flood of persecution.

The remnant

And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. Revelation 12:17

In this final verse of Revelation Chapter 12, the dragon was *enraged* with the woman, and *went* (away, or departed, as one thwarted in his attempt to carry the woman away in the flood of persecution) *to make war with the rest* (KJV: remnant) *of her offspring* (KJV: seed).

Some versions render the word *remnant* as *the rest*, or *remainder* of the woman's offspring. According to Dr. Strong the word *remnant* means *that which remains, residue, rest*. The dragon makes war with the residue, or the rest of the church's followers.

41 Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (London: Strahan and Cadell, 1789), chapter 39: 229-232.

In Revelation 12 there are two *offspring* or seeds: the *man child*, Jesus (v5) and the *remnant of her offspring*, or seed (v17), meaning the remainder, or the last of her offspring. This clearly refers to the final remnant of God's people before the Second Advent of Christ.

Remnants in Scripture

The key to understanding the term *remnant* is found in the Old Testament. God's people are continually pictured as a remnant, as survivors; a minority, clinging to the true faith while the majority of the professed people of God compromise with error and the world. The New Testament confirms this Old Testament concept. Jesus declared:

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.
Matthew 7:13-14

God's true people have always been a minority, always a remnant. As Jesus said:

Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. *Luke 12:32*

Truth has ever been on the scaffold and error has ever been on the throne.

Before the universal Flood, God's people, the descendents of Seth, were called *the sons of God*⁴² in contrast to the descendents of Cain who were called *the sons or daughters of men*.⁴³ Finally there were compromises and intermarriages between the two groups and as a result the whole earth became corrupt. However a remnant was saved, consisting of Noah and his family.

In the post flood era, from Shem to Abraham, God's people, the Shemites, were opposed to the Hamites - the builders of the tower of Babel. Again there was compromise, and idolatry soon permeated the people of God. Again, God saved a remnant, the family of Abraham whom he called out to the land of Canaan.

During the Exodus of Israel from Egypt to Canaan, for 40 years Israel was *the church in the wilderness*. As a result of their rebellion God declared that all adults should die in the wilderness; except for a remnant comprising Caleb and Joshua and their families.

In the Promised Land from the time of Joshua to Zedekiah the last king of Judah, repeatedly the people of God compromised, and were finally delivered into Babylonian captivity. Only a remnant remained - Jeremiah and his associates. After Israel's captivity and deliverance by Cyrus, God called them to return to their homeland, but only a remnant responded. These were the Jews under Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah.

At the time of the First Advent, the Jews compromised again in a different way, but God saved a remnant. These were the Jews who accepted Jesus Christ as the Messiah. They formed the nucleus of the Christian church.

⁴² Genesis 6:2

⁴³ Ibid.

Remnants in the Christian era

In the early christian church, from the time of the Apostles to Constantine, after fierce persecution, the Christians came under royal favor. This resulted in compromise and apostasy, but again God saved a remnant. They were those who resisted the apostasy and withdrew from the centers of civilization beginning in around 538 AD, dwelling in the wilderness regions.

During the time of the Protestant Reformation, from 1517 to around 1700 AD, God's professed people were the Lutherans, the Calvinists (the Reform Church) and the Anglicans. However, once again compromise began to creep in. They did not fully forsake Catholicism and as a result those churches became spiritually dead. Yet out of these churches God called a remnant. This consisted of the dissenters and the independents, known as the Anabaptists, the Brownists or Congregationalists, the Baptists, the Pietists, the Moravians and the Methodists as well as a few lesser known groups.

The end-time remnant

Beginning around 1798 God's people were called to receive further light from Scripture. However the majority neglected to follow this increasing illumination and as a result they began to slide down the path of apostasy. Once again, God preserved a remnant - those who received the light and embraced the Three Angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12.⁴⁴ This movement has been identified as the remnant of the end time. (Refer to Appendix A for a table of scriptural references to God's latter day remnant).

According to Revelation 12 the *Woman* - the true church - was to be in the wilderness, in obscurity, for 1260 years from 538 to 1798 AD. This suggests that while Christian denominations were established prior to 1798, and God used those groups mightily in His cause, these bodies did not comprise the Scriptural true church. That church was out of the public eye, unrecognized, in the *wilderness*.

⁴⁴ A.P. Cooke, *God's Final Ultimatum to Men* (Sydney, Self-published, 1985)

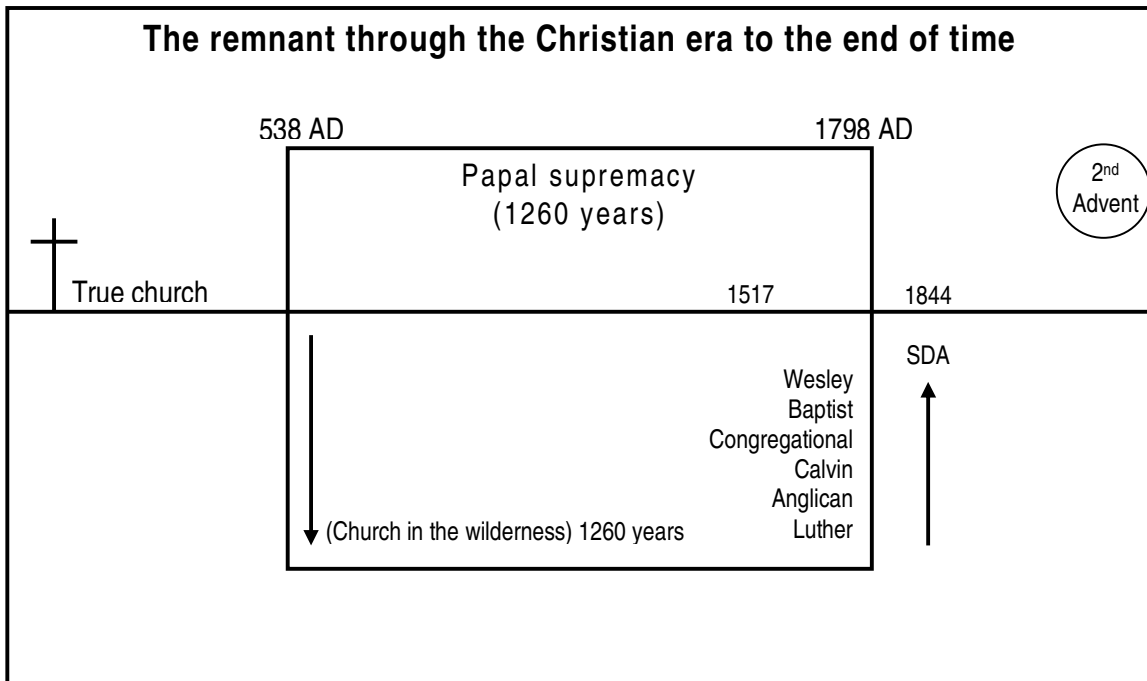


Figure 3: The remnant through the Christian era to the end of time

Identifying characteristics of the end-time remnant

It is not until after 1798 AD that we can expect to see the true remnant church publicly emerge. Revelation 12 presents seven unique specifications by which the sincere searcher may be able to distinguish the true remnant.

1. Arises after 1798
2. A minority group – a remnant
3. Apostolic - similar in belief and practice to the apostles
4. Unpopular. It receives the wrath of the dragon
5. It keeps the commandments of God.
6. Has the testimony of Jesus
7. It will proclaim the Second Advent.

Let us examine each of these.

1. Arises after 1798

The truth is that under Satan's influence hundreds of religious groups arose in the time period after 1798. Satan understands the prophecies of Scripture and this was his strategy to confuse the searcher after truth. He was aware that the true church would return to the public arena after 1798 and he therefore endeavored to hinder the purpose of God by obfuscation and clever counterfeits. Each movement claimed in sincerity that it was the true church and that it alone had the truth. How clever a strategy this was - but how confusing. Let us continue to the six other distinguishing marks.

2. A minority group

All the groups that arose after 1798 were minority groups. However some of these can no longer be regarded as a minority following.

3. Apostolic

To illustrate this point, we use the term *remnant* as understood in the commercial world. A remnant is a small piece of material left over from a bolt of cloth. That remnant is of the same texture, color and pattern as the rest of the material comprising the bolt. So with the final remnant of the church, it will have the same beliefs and practices as the true church of the apostles.

It is significant to note that nearly all of the religious groups that have risen since 1798 claim to be apostolic. We must therefore examine the New Testament to discover the teachings and character of the apostolic church.

4. Unpopular

The true remnant church will be the target of Satan's wrath. This is where the first discriminator emerges. Most of the groups which arose after 1798 are now popular. The Pentecostals are popular. The Church of Christ is popular. The Salvation Army is popular. On the other hand, the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons have been very unpopular. They claim that this is evidence that they must be the true people of God. However they must fulfill all six specifications in order to comprise the remnant.

5. Keeps the commandments of God

This identifier cancels out all who reject God's law of the Ten Commandments. Sadly, today this involves the great majority of all religious groups. Commandment keeping must include the fourth commandment, which encompasses the seventh-day Sabbath because the Scripture states:

For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. James 2:10

In addition to the Ten Commandments, Scripture teaches obedience to other commandments such as baptism by immersion (Mark 16:15, 16) and the Ordinance of Humility (see John 13). Scripture also promotes obedience to the laws of health mentioned in Acts 15 which hark back to the health laws given by God to Moses.

More than one group observes the true Biblical seventh-day Sabbath, but nearly all fail in the area of temperance and healthful living.

6. Has the testimony of Jesus

This sixth point is particularly relevant at this stage. The final remnant will possess *the testimony of Jesus* (See Appendix B for a detailed definition of *the testimony of Jesus*).

...the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Revelation 19:10

What is the spirit of prophecy? A parallel verse sheds light on this expression.

Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God. Revelation 22:9

Notice the parallels between these two verses which show that *the spirit of prophecy* involves the existence of a prophet.

Parallels between Revelation 19:10 and 22:9	
Revelation 19:10	Revelation 22:9
<i>...See that you do not do that!</i>	<i>...See that you do not do that.</i>
<i>I am your fellow servant...</i>	<i>For I am your fellow servant</i>
<i>and of your brethren</i>	<i>and of your brethren</i>
<i>who have the testimony of Jesus.</i>	<i>the prophets...</i>
<i>Worship God! ...</i>	<i>Worship God.</i>

The *testimony of Jesus* is the equivalent of *the prophets*. In Scripture the term *testimony* is employed in both Old and New Testaments to describe the message which the prophets received from God.

Thy prophets testify against you. Nehemiah 9:34

...and testified against them by Your Spirit in Your prophets. Nehemiah 9:30

...nor heeded Your commandments and Your testimonies, with which You testified against them. Nehemiah 9:34

...I testify among you this day. Deuteronomy 32:46

And they rejected...his testimonies... 2 Kings 17:15

...you have not walked in...His testimonies. Jeremiah 44:23

To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. Isaiah 8:20

In the book of Revelation, the word *testimony* is used when the prophet John receives a message from God for the church.

I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches... Revelation 22:16

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book... Revelation 22:18

He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly". Revelation 22:20

who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. Revelation 1:2

...the testimony of Jesus Christ. Revelation 1:9

...the testimony of Jesus... Revelation 19:10

The word *testimony*, or *testify*, is used eight times in Revelation and it always refers to the revelation given by God to His prophets (see Appendix B). This requires the existence of one who has the prophetic gift. Thus within the final remnant there will exist the prophetic gift. There will be one who possesses the unique spiritual gift of prophecy.

The Mormons claim to have the gift of prophecy in the person of Joseph Smith. However the Scriptures present at least nine rigid tests by which believers may test anyone claiming to be a prophet (See Appendix C). These were never fulfilled by Joseph Smith.

7. Believes in the Second Advent

This seventh point emphasizes that the final remnant existing in the End Time will be aware of the imminence of the Second Advent. It will be a group living in expectation of the Advent. In obedience to the instruction of Christ, it will be proclaiming the Second Advent and urging preparation for it. In other words, it will be an adventist group of people.

A group with all identifying characteristics

There is only one group that fits all seven specifications above, and that is the world-wide, Seventh-day Adventist movement. While it is a minority group, it is the most widespread Protestant movement in the world today.

Seventh-day Adventists claim that they are the bearers of God's last message to the world, a message that prepares God's people worldwide for the Second Advent of Christ.

This does not mean that Seventh-day Adventists believe that they alone are the people of God. They believe that they have God's final message for the world but they also believe that there are remnants of God's people in other churches of Christendom. There are other remnants of God's people - born again believers - who are living according to the light that they have. These remnants do not fulfill the seven specifications of the true remnant. What then will be the destiny of these remnants that are scattered throughout the various churches of Christendom?

Composition of the final remnant

Scripture reveals that God has set a special standard to prepare his saints for translation. This standard is depicted in the character of the 144,000, the number that symbolizes the final remnant of God's people.⁴⁵ Those who fail to permit God to produce within them the character essential for translation will be shaken out of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Only those who are recognized by God as overcomers will comprise the final remnant. This will therefore include only a minority of Seventh-day Adventists.⁴⁶

The majority of the final remnant will comprise those remnants which are now in Christian churches but who will ultimately come out of those churches in response to the final call of God:

⁴⁵ See: A.P. Cooke, *The 144,000*, 2nd ed. (Sydney, Self-published, 2010),

⁴⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* 608;
Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church* 5:80-81, 136.

Come out of her (Babylon) my people that you be not partakers of her sins and that you receive not of her plagues. Revelation 18:1-4

Seventh-day Adventists believe that there will be large numbers who will come out of the various religious bodies and join them in the keeping of all the commandments of God, and who will be ready for the coming of Christ. They believe that the majority of God's people are in the Christian churches.⁴⁷ These godly remnants will finally come out and unite with those Seventh-day Adventists who are still true to Christ. This means that finally, *there will be one fold and one shepherd*, just as it was in Jesus' day. Jesus said

And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. John 10:16

Today God has numerous *other sheep* who are not in the fold of the final remnant. But He says, *them also I must bring and they will hear my voice*. When the final call of Christ goes to the world, those Christians still in *Babylon* will hear His voice calling them to keep all of God's commandments; calling them out of *Babylon*; calling them into the final remnant. At that time, *there shall be one fold and one shepherd*. That one fold will be

...the remnant of her seed, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. Revelation 12:17

Conclusion

The prophecy of Revelation 12 also declares that

The dragon was wrath 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. Revelation 12:17

Elsewhere we have shown that the dragon represents the political powers which Satan uses to make war on the saints. This warfare is detailed from Revelation 13 onwards and discussed in subsequent topics. The chapters subsequent to Revelation 12 introduce the beast with the seven heads which rises out of the sea, the second beast with two horns like a lamb that rises out of the earth, and the image to the beast. These powers will be involved in the great final conflict with Christ and the final remnant of His people.

⁴⁷ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* 383.

Appendices

Appendix A - God's latter day remnant described in Scripture

Concept	Composition	Credentials	Commitment
2 Corinthians 6:14-18 Joel 2:32 John 3:1-3 Titus 2:11-14	Romans 9:27; 11:5 Romans 3:2; 18:1-5	Revelation 12:1-17	Luke 9:57-62 Revelation 14:4;17:14
Commission	Character	Conviction	
Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20 Revelation 10:11; 14:6-11	Revelation 7:1-3;14:1-5,12 Romans 9:27; 11:5	John 1:6, 19-23 Matthew 11:7-8	

Appendix B - The testimony of Jesus

There is some misunderstanding as to what *the testimony of Jesus* is. Some claim that it means *the testimony to Jesus Christ*, or the *testimony about Jesus Christ*. The RSV, the New English Bible, Phillip's translation and the 20th Century New Testament all translate this phrase as *the testimony to Jesus Christ*. This raises a question regarding the term *the testimony of Jesus Christ* as it is translated in the KJV and the NKJV.

Four times the term *the testimony of Jesus Christ* is used in Revelation. (1:2; 1:9; 12:17; 19:10) In the first, second and fourth references, the Revised Standard Version renders the phrase as, *the testimony of Jesus Christ*, but when it translates Rev.12:17 it translates it as *the testimony to Jesus Christ*. This is pointedly inconsistent on the part of the translators. *The New English Bible*, when it translates Revelation 1:2 says, *the testimony TO Jesus Christ*. This again is inconsistent. Likewise with Phillip's translation, where in translating the same two verses, he also is inconsistent.

Dr. Weymouth translates Revelation 12:17 as *the testimony OF Jesus Christ*, but in the other three verses he also is inconsistent. He translates Revelation 19:10 as *the testimony TO Jesus Christ*. He translates Revelation 1:9 as *the testimony BY Jesus Christ* and he translates Revelation 1:2 as *the testimony TO Jesus Christ*. Yet in his footnote under Revelation 1:2 he says, *the literal Greek is, 'the testimony OF Jesus Christ'*.⁴⁸

Nine other translations, or versions, render Revelation 12:17 as *the testimony OF Jesus Christ*. These are: the King James, The New King James, Moffat, The New International, the Douay, Fenton, Marshall, The Amplified New Testament, and Jamieson, Fausset & Brown. On this basis we are assured that the Greek of Revelation 12:17 should indeed be translated as *the testimony OF Jesus Christ*.

⁴⁸ Richard Francis Weymouth, *The Modern Speech New Testament* (New York: The Baker and Taylor Co., 1903), Footnote under Revelation 1:2.

Appendix C - Nine tests of a true prophet

A. Physical tests	Demonstrated by a prophet in vision
1. Loss of natural strength	Daniel 10:7- 8; 16 -17,
2. Receives supernatural strength	Daniel 10:18 -19
3. The breathing stops	Daniel 10:17
4. Eyes remain open	Numbers 24:2-4; 15-16.
5. Unconscious of earthly surroundings	2 Corinthians 12:1-4.
B. Moral tests	The teachings and influence of a true prophet
6. Teaches that Jesus Christ came in the flesh	I John 4:1-3
7. In harmony with the Law and the Testimony	Isaiah 8:19-20
8. His/her predictions come true	Deuteronomy 18:20-22.
9. Life and influence are consistently for good	Matthew 7:15-20.

Applying the tests

The first five tests are evidence that the person fulfilling them is under the influence of supernatural powers.

The final four tests determine whether the supernatural power is of God or of Satan.

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