

# SATAN'S WARFARE AGAINST THE CHURCH

## 1. UNDER what figure was the Christian church represented to the apostle John?

“And there appeared a great wonder [margin, sign] in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.” **Revelation 12:1.**

**NOTES** — Frequently in the Scriptures a woman is used to represent the church. See **Jeremiah 6:2**; **2Corinthians 11:2**. The sun represents the light of the gospel with which the church was clothed at the first advent (**1John 2:8**); the moon under her feet, the waning light of the former dispensation; and the twelve stars, the twelve apostles.

“Woman in her innocence was attacked by ‘that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan.’ . . . At the end of that first crafty assault and speedy victory the dragon met with his rebuff, in words like these: ‘The seed of the woman shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.’ . . . **In the Revelation** the scene is changed from Eden to the heavens, and before you stand again the woman and the serpent, in the same position of antagonism as before, the serpent still the assailant, only this time more openly so. . . . The woman is no longer a simple, childlike personage, but a *wonder*; she walks not among the trees and flowers, but amid the orbs of heaven. She is clothed with the sun, the moon is under her feet, and upon her head is a coronet of twelve stars. In her you see the great cause of truth and righteousness embodied—she is, in fact, the church of God in all ages, the woman whose Seed blesses all the nations of the earth.” *C. H. Spurgeon, in The Tabernacle Pulpit, March 15, 1896.*

**Publisher's Addition:** “The chapter first speaks of a woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. A woman is the symbol of the Church, a lewd woman representing a corrupt or apostate Church, as in **Ezekiel 23:2-4**, etc., which refers to the Jewish Church in a state of backsliding, and in **Revelation 17:3-6,15,18**, which refers to the apostate Romish Church; and a virtuous

woman representing the true Church, as in the verse under consideration. At what period in her history could the Church of Christ be properly represented as here described? Ans. At the opening of the gospel dispensation, and at no other time; for then the glory of this dispensation, like the light of the sun, had just risen upon her; the former or Mosaic dispensation, which like the moon, shone with a borrowed light, had just passed, and lay beneath her feet; and twelve inspired apostles, like a crown of twelve stars, graced the first organization of the gospel Church. To this period these representations can apply, but to no other. The prophet antedates this period a little by referring to the time when the Church, with long expectation, was awaiting the advent into this world of the glorious Redeemer, and represents the new dispensation as already opened, and the Christian Church organized as this was the condition in which Christ was to leave it at the conclusion of his brief earthly ministry. **Uriah Smith, *The Marvel of Nations*, pg. 97-98 (1887)**

## **2. How is the church at the first advent described?**

“And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.” **Verse 2.**

**NOTE** — The church is in labor and pain while she brings forth Christ and her children, in the midst of afflictions and persecutions. See **Romans 8:19, 22; 1John 3:1, 2; 2Timothy 3:12.**

## **3. How are the birth, work, and ascension of Christ briefly described?**

“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.” **Verse 5.**

**NOTE.** — Specifically this must refer to Christ (see **Psalm 2:7-9**); but through Him is also prefigured the experience of the people of God; who finally in the Judgment are to share with Christ in ruling the nations with a rod of iron (**Revelation 2:26, 27**), and, like Him, when their work on earth is accomplished be “caught up,” at His appearing, to God and to His throne. **1Thessalonians 4:15-17.**

#### **4. What other sign, or wonder, appeared in heaven?**

“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. 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.” **Verses 3, 4.**

#### **5. Who is this dragon said to be?**

“And the great dragon was cast out, *that old serpent*, called the *Devil*, and *Satan*, which deceiveth the whole world.” Verse 9.

**NOTE** — Primarily the dragon represents Satan, the great enemy and persecutor of the church in all ages. But Satan works through principalities and powers in his efforts to destroy the people of God. It was through a Roman king, King Herod that he sought to destroy Christ as soon as He was born. **Matthew 2:16.** Rome must therefore be symbolized by the dragon. The seven heads of the dragon are interpreted by some to refer to the “seven hills” upon which the city of Rome is built; by others, to the seven forms of government through which Rome passed; and by still others, and more broadly, to the seven great monarchies which have oppressed the people of God; namely, Egypt, Assyria, Chaldea, Persia, Greece, pagan Rome, and papal Rome, in either of which Rome is represented and included. See page 269. The ten horns, as in the fourth beast of **Daniel 7**, evidently refer to the ten kingdoms into which Rome was finally divided, and thus again identify the dragon with the Roman power.

#### **6. How is the conflict between Christ and Satan described?**

“And there was war in heaven; Michael and His angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. 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.” **Verses 7-9.**

**NOTE** — This conflict, begun in heaven, continues on earth. Near the close of Christ’s ministry, He said, “I beheld Satan as lightning *fall from heaven*.” **Luke 10:18.** “Now is the judgment

of this world: now shall the prince of this world be *cast out*.” **John 12:31**. From the councils of the representatives of the various worlds to which Satan, as the prince of this world, was formerly admitted (**Job 1:6, 7; 2:1, 2**), he was cast out when he crucified Christ, the Son of God.

**7. What shout of triumph was heard in heaven following the victory gained by Christ?**

“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. . . . Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them.*” **Verses 10–12**.

**8. Why was woe at this same time proclaimed to the world?**

“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.*” **Verse 12**, last part.

**NOTE** — This not only shows that, since the crucifixion of Christ Satan knows that his doom is sealed, and that he has but a limited time in which to work, but that his efforts are largely if not wholly now confined to this world, and concentrated upon its inhabitants. Better than many professed Christians, Satan knows that time is short.

**9. What did the dragon do when cast to the earth?**

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

**NOTE** — The persecution of Christians began under pagan Rome, but was carried on far more extensively under papal Rome. **Matthew 24:21, 22**.

**10. What definite period of time was allotted to this great persecution of God’s people under papal Rome?**

“And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, unto her place, where she is nourished *for a time, and times, and half a time*, from the face of the serpent.” **Verse 14**.

**NOTE** — This is the same period as that mentioned in **Daniel 7:25**, and, like the ten horns, identifies the dragon with the fourth beast of **Daniel 7**, and its later work with the work of the little horn of that same beast. In **Revelation 13:5** this period is referred to as “forty-two months,” and in **Revelation 12:6** as 1260 days, each representing 1260 literal years, the period allotted to the supremacy of papal Rome. Beginning in 538 A.D., it ended in 1798, when the Pope was taken prisoner by the French. See notes on page 223. The woman fleeing into the wilderness fittingly describes the condition of the church during those times of bitter persecution.

**11. What was Satan’s design in thus persecuting the church?**

“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.*” **Verse 15.**

**12. How was the flood stayed, and Satan’s design defeated?**

“*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.*” **Verse 16.**

**NOTE** — The mountain fastnesses, quiet retreats, and secluded valleys of southwestern Europe for centuries shielded many who refused allegiance to the Papacy. Here, too, may be seen the results of the work of the Reformation of the sixteenth century, when many of the governments of Europe came to the help of the cause of reform, by staying the hand of persecution and protecting the lives of those who dared to take their stand for the right. The discovery of America, and the opening up of this country as an asylum for the oppressed of Europe at this time, may also be included in the “help” here referred to.

**13. What did Christ say would be the result if the days of persecution were not shortened?**

“Except those days should be shortened, *there should no flesh be saved*: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.” **Matthew 24:22.**

**14. Still bent on persecution, how does Satan manifest his enmity against the remnant church?**

“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.” **Revelation 12:17.**

**NOTE** — To the very end, Satan will persecute and seek to destroy the people of God. Against the remnant, or last portion of the church, he is especially to make war. Their obedience to God’s commandments, and their possession of the testimony of Jesus, or spirit of prophecy (**Revelation 19:10**), are especially offensive to him, and excite his intense ire.

SOLDIERS of Christ, arise,  
And put your armor on;  
Fight, for the battle will be ours;  
We fight to win a crown.  
We fight not against flesh,  
We wrestle not with blood;  
But principalities and powers,  
And for the truth of God.

CHARLES WESLEY.