

Chapter 12:

Verse 1: "A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head." NIV. The woman represents the Nation of Israel. The glory of God is referenced here as the sun and moon and the nation from which Jesus was born. Genesis 37: 9-11 regarding Joseph's dream is good reference here as well. The twelve stars on her head are referencing the 12 tribes of Israel. Verse 2 references the woman being pregnant. This is speaking of Jesus and is later emphasized in verse 5. There are some commentaries and books that reference this woman as the church, or Christ followers. I believe there is too much reference here to the nation of Israel for that to be true. I also believe that the events that unfold in this chapter, is happening during the last half of the tribulation. Christians, that had made themselves ready, will have already been raptured from the earth. Sealed Jews are believers in God, (they do not believe that Jesus is the Messiah), will still be on the earth during this time.

Verse 3: Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads. NIV. This dragon is Satan. He controls the world government that has 10 kings and 7 governmental systems in this new Empire. The reference to sweeping 1/3 of the stars out of the sky is referencing the angels that sided with Satan and fell when he was driven out of heaven. Verses 4 and 5 reference Satan trying to destroy Jesus when he was born. Verse 6 speaks to the future when Israel will escape Satan to a place prepared for her from God. The period of time she will be protected in the wilderness is 1,260 days, or 3 ½ years. In Matthew 24:16 in the NIV, Jesus states: "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." Judea is the ancient name for the mountainous region outside of Jerusalem. There will be Jewish Israelites (non-Christian), that will need to flee during the 2nd half of the tribulation after the Antichrist takes over and puts his "abomination that causes desolation", that is referenced in Matthew 24 and Daniel 11.

Verses 7-9: Speak to a future spiritual battle in heaven between Satan, his fallen angels, and Michael and the angels of God in heaven. Michael and the angels of heaven defeat Satan and they are hurled down to earth. Verses 10-13: worship is being given to God and Jesus. There is celebration because Satan, "the great accuser", has been permanently cast out of heaven. There is celebration of those who have overcome Satan by the sacrifice of Jesus and maintaining their testimony. "But woe to the earth and sea..." is referenced here; 2 distinct groups. I believe this is because it is directly speaking to the nation of Israel (as the earth), and the gentile nations (as the sea), as both groups will be faced with the trials of Satan being loosed upon the earth to reign. Note though that I believe there is special focus here to believers who have not made themselves ready. Those who do not believe in Jesus and/or have not made themselves ready for the rapture, even if they believe in God. If the author were speaking to everyone, he might have just written "inhabitants of the earth".

Verse 13: Speaks to the devil going after Israel after being hurled to the earth. Verse 14: Speaks to Israel being given "2 wings of a great eagle" with which to escape Satan in the place that God has prepared for her during the last half of the tribulation. Verse 15 & 16: Speaks of Satan spewing

water like a river to try and overtake the woman. The earth opens up and swallows the water and prevents it from harming Israel. Not sure if this will be physical water and some type of miraculous action, or if it is figurative of an army under Satan's authority. I believe it is more the later, however, it will not prevail whatever it is. Verse 17: Speaks that Satan is enraged by Israel being delivered from his grasp and will make war with those who believe in God, keep His commandments, and believe in Jesus. They are referenced as "the woman's offspring". Again, this scripture is specifically stating there are Christians still on the earth at this time. I believe these are Christians who weren't "ready" when the rapture occurred, or people that begin to believe and accept Jesus during the tribulation. I will go over more of this on the section that covers the resurrection and rapture of the church.

If you have made it to this point in the study and haven't thought much of, or focused on, the 7 churches of Asia; go back and revisit chapters 2 and 3. Although many people think these churches represent "past" churches or periods in Christian history, I would encourage you to look at these churches with different eyes. Notice the different levels of love and devotion to Christ. Pay attention to the rebukes...and the rewards.