

## “REVELATION: DOES IT DESCRIBE OUR DAYS?” SERIES

### #13: “Chapter 12”

#### INTRO:

We’ve covered the church age three times, now: once in the letters to the seven churches; once in chapters 4-7, where we saw the tribulations and persecution of the church; and again, in chapters 8-11, where we saw the ultimate defeat of the church by the beast and the resurrection of the church at the second coming of Christ.

Now, we begin the fourth description of the church age, and we meet the five enemies of Christ and his church: the dragon, the beast out of the sea, the beast out of the earth, Babylon, and those who have the mark of the beast.

Thus far, we’ve seen the *outward* struggle between the church and the world. With this chapter, we’ll see that it’s actually a deeper struggle between Christ and Satan.

#### **HERE IN CHAPTER 12, WE MEET THREE OF THE MAIN CHARACTERS THAT OPPOSE CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH.**

1. First of all, there’s **“the great red dragon.”**

Verses 7-9 describe who he was and who he became:

***<sup>7</sup>Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, <sup>8</sup>but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. <sup>9</sup>And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.***

2. Then there’s the **“beast rising out of the sea.”**

Verses 1-8 of chapter 13 describe this **“beast”**:

***And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. <sup>2</sup> And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. <sup>3</sup> One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. <sup>4</sup> And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?”***

***<sup>5</sup> And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. <sup>6</sup> It opened***

**its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. <sup>7</sup> Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, <sup>8</sup> and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.**

3. Third, there's **"the beast rising out of the earth."**

We read about this **"beast"** in verses 11 through 18 of chapter 13:

**<sup>11</sup> Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb, and it spoke like a dragon. <sup>12</sup> It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. <sup>13</sup> It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, <sup>14</sup> and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. <sup>15</sup> And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. <sup>16</sup> Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, <sup>17</sup> so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. <sup>18</sup> This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.**

We'll deal more with these characters next week.

### **ALSO HERE IN CHAPTER 12, WE SEE THE OUTWARD MANIFESTATION OF THE WAR BETWEEN CHRIST AND SATAN.**

This chapter begins with the vision of a pregnant woman and a red dragon standing over her, waiting to devour her child as soon as he's born. God saves the child, and the woman flees to the wilderness, where she is cared for 1,260 days.

Verses 1-6: **And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. <sup>2</sup> She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. <sup>3</sup> And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. <sup>4</sup> His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child, he might devour it. <sup>5</sup> She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his**

***throne, <sup>6</sup> and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.***

The woman here is not Mary; Satan never pursued Mary. The woman here symbolizes the church – God’s faithful people under the Old Covenant and His faithful people under the New Covenant. It was through them that God brought His Son into the world.

The child, of course, is Christ Himself. He is the promised **“seed of woman”** from Genesis 3:15.

The dragon, of course, is Satan. He wants to kill the child, the Son of God, but he fails.

Verses 13-17 tell us what Satan’s “Plan B” is:

***<sup>13</sup> And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. <sup>14</sup> But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. <sup>15</sup> The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. <sup>16</sup> But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. <sup>17</sup> Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.***

Satan, failing to stop Jesus from coming into the world and from being preached throughout the world, attacks the church. We’re seeing this today. Satan and his two “beasts” are ‘whittling down,” so to speak, the church. Our numbers are literally decreasing, proportionately, day by day. When our generation, the Builder Generation, is gone, the church will shrink more than moderately. When the Boomer Generation is gone, the church will all but disappear, unless the Gen-Xers change course, since only about 18% of them attend church.

This **“time and times and half a time”** is the same as 1,260 days or three and one-half months, and it symbolizes the church age, from 30 A.D. through the present time. The church will survive, but it will be few in number. The two witnesses of chapter 11, the ministers and missionaries of the church, will be killed in that the world will have eliminated them, the battle of Armageddon will be fought, and Christ will win the battle, judge Satan and the unbelievers and take his church to heaven.

**IN CLOSING:**

Where do you suppose we are on the timeline? You know, a lot of very smart people have determined that the earth and the universe it's in is somewhere between six and seven thousand years old. Don't believe all this "billions and billions" stuff you hear. To God, seven clearly represents completeness. Many orthodox Jews believe that the messiah is coming in or after the seventh millennium of the earth. Of course, we know that Jesus is the Messiah, so they're wrong in expecting another. But could it be that Jesus is *returning* in or after the seventh millennium? Is so, it may be soon.