

Revelation 12

Part 2

Chapter 3

THE MAN CHILD

“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” (Revelation 12:5).

“And she brought forth a man child,” (vs 5)

The narrative is devoid of anything related to Christ’s life, ministry or death. A “*male child*” (*huion arsen* – G) is born. Later, in Revelation 12:17 the seed of this woman (the remnant) is also masculine. This gender emphasis is intriguing since in Daniel 7:13-14, 22, 27 there is an additional gender fusion between the “Son of Man” with the “saints.”¹ Does this suggest a deep “familial tie” – a divine bond?

*“Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and **co-heirs with Christ**, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory” (Romans 8:17 – NIV).*

- Most scholars (i.e., Beale, Thomas, Stefanovic) identify this son as the Christ child – but there are major issues adopting this interpretation that were addressed in the previous verse.
- Osborne concludes that it most likely alludes to Isaiah 66:7 (LXX), where it signifies the rebirth of “Israel” (people of God) out of the travails of captivity (and apostasy). The “deliverance” (“caught up”) is intimated to be divinely directed and protected. The “rod of iron” rule is *parousia* (G) associated. Thus, this “birth” imagery relates to God’s people at the end time.²

“The ‘male child’ has been identified [also] by past commentators, both ancient and modern, as part of the church or the whole church or people of God, whose rapture represents some form of divine protection. One rationale for this is that the Ps. 2:9 prophecy cited in 12:5 is clearly applied to the [last-day] church in Rev. 2:26-27.”³

- This “child” will become a ruler (next phrase) over nations. The language of this promise is the same as the authority God gave Christ in Psalm 2. However, it is also an apocalyptic promise to the overcomers who do God’s will **to the end** (Revelation 2:26-27)! A potential Thyatiran church reward.

¹ Johnson, Alan F.; *Revelation*, p. 514, from Gaebelin, Frank E. (gen. ed.); *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. II (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 49530; 1981).

² Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 463.

³ Beale, G. K.; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan – 1999), p. 641.

- Messianic authority is shared with His disciples (Revelation 1:6, 3:21, 20:6; I Corinthians 6:2) and in Daniel 7:13-14 and 27.⁴ This heightens the concept of John 17:22: *“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.”* This oneness reflects the *“abide in me”* in John 15:4.
- In the Midrash, on Psalm 2 of the enthronement citation, the *“Son”* of Psalm 2:7-9 and the *“Son of man”* of Daniel 7:13 are both interpreted as Israel and equate the nation as God’s ***“firstborn.”***⁵

The story of the victorious church, the 144,000, the ***end-time firstfruits*** (Revelation 14:4 – like the spring barley, the early harvest in the Jewish economy), begins when she is about to give *“birth!”* She is *“ready”* to deliver. The dragon stands before the woman/church to devour her child as soon as it is born – a death threat. Then ***“she brought forth a man child”*** (12:4b, 5a).

As the story of how the woman became a victorious body of Christ unfolds (the *“sign”*), this *“birth,”* this *“deliverance”* of a *“man child”* represents the *“sonship”* of her labor, the fruit of her labor.

- *“Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ”* (Galatians 4:7).
- *“And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father”* (Galatians 4:6).

The sonship of believers is an important concept that is strongly intimated here!

This is a wonderfully developed New Testament concept:⁶

1. In Romans 8:14 and 19 Paul shows in an eschatological setting, a sonship typifying the saved. Believers have received the *“spirit of sonship”* and can thus also cry *“Abba! Father!”* (vs 15) as Christ’s fellow heirs move toward future glory.

Galatians 3:26 – 4:7 is even more specific: human beings are children *“through faith in Christ Jesus”* (3:26).
2. The letter to the Hebrews also ties sonship in an eschatological setting. Christ’s sonship is the theme of 1:1-14. Just as the *“Son”* must suffer in solidarity with human suffering (2:10b, 14-18; 4:15; 5:7-9), so also must the *“sons”* endure suffering and, in a sense, even chastisement by God (12:5-8 citing Proverbs 3:11f.).
3. Revelation 21:7 uses the motif of divine sonship in the context of the overcomer, building on similar imagery from verse 3.

⁴ Johnson, Alan F.; *Revelation*, p. 514, from Gaebelien, Frank E. (gen. ed.); *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. II (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 49530; 1981), p. 446.

⁵ Aune, David E.; *52B World Biblical Commentary; Revelation 6–16* (World Books; Dallas, Texas), 1997, p. 689.

⁶ Schreiner, Thomas R.; *Romans* (Baker Academic; Grand Rapids, MI; 1998), pp. 422-436. Moo, Douglas J.; *The Epistle to the Romans* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI; 1996), pp. 498-517. George, Timothy; *The New American Commentary – Galatians* (B&H Publishing Group; Nashville, TN; 1994), p. 273-275. Longenecker, Richard N.; *Word Biblical Commentary – Galatians* (Tomas Nelson; Nashville, TN; 1990), pp. 150-159.

The woman represents the purified last-day church – the firstfruits – the 144,000. The birth of the son is her mission of expanding the “body” through her seed. The son represents that final expanded body of believers.

“Specific allusion to Isaiah 66:7 is evident from the verbal similarity between Revelation 12:2 and 5 and Isaiah 66:7.” Where there is a combination of “son” and “male.”

Isaiah 66:7:

She travailed, she brought forth ...
she gave birth to a male

Isaiah 66:8:

Zion travailed, she also brought forth her
sons

“The singular ‘male’ and the plural ‘sons’ both apparently refer to Israel.”⁷

“who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron:” (vs 5)

These words again echo Psalm 2:9 and are repeated of King Jesus returning to earth in Revelation 19:15. The latter is when He is King of kings and Lord of lords (19:16), when His “iron scepter” of rule cannot be broken. At that time all nations will be “destroyed” (not ruled) by the sword in His mouth.⁸ It is a metaphor that God’s kingdom will reign supreme.

- This phrase is also quoted in Revelation 2:27, which announces that the church will rule with Christ, a distinct allusion to the “sonship” concept.⁹
- “*And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And **he shall rule them with a rod of iron**; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father*” (Revelation 2:26-27).

These overcomers are also described in masculine terms, sharing the same rule with Christ.

- Again, this occurs at the *parousia* (Second Coming); thus the imagery points to that *future period* at the consummation when God’s people will join Christ in the everlasting kingdom!¹⁰

The “*nations*” are the earth dwellers, the inhabitants of Babylon the Great, who follow and worship the beast (Revelation 13:7-8; 14:8; 17:15; 18:3, 23), finally being destroyed by the sword from Christ’s mouth (19:15).

“and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne” (vs 5)

The conviction deepens that this “*man child*” is a significant metaphor for the “**remnant**” of her seed – the great multitude “birthed” by the work of the witnesses. That is why Daniel made

⁷ Beale, *op. cit.*, pp. 640-641.

⁸ Thomas, Robert L.; *Revelation 8–22 – An Exegetical Commentary* (Moody Press, Chicago, 1992), vol. II, p. 126.

⁹ Brighton, Louis A; *Revelation, Concordance Commentary* (Concordance Publishing House, Saint Louis), 1999, p. 331.

¹⁰ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 463.

precision clear that the “kingdom which shall never be destroyed” belongs to **both** Christ (7:13-14) and the saints (7:22, 27). That “iron rule” in 19:15 begins at the eschaton.¹¹

The “snatching” or “seizing” (*arpazo* – G) suggests that it was sudden and without resistance.¹² There is a safe approach to interpreting this that is addressed by Bala-Schneider:

“There are special areas in which this verb is used through experiences of being **carried off** supernaturally in the NT.

- **One** is in Acts 8:39 when Philip is **caught up** by the Spirit of the Lord following his baptism of the eunuch.
- **Two** is when Paul speaks of an ecstatic experience of being ‘**caught up** to the third heaven,’ ‘into Paradise’ (2 Cor 12:2, 4; RSV vv. 2, 3).
- **Another** is in the traditional formulas of the rapture and ascension texts of ancient Jewish literature (cf. esp. *2 Enoch* 8; further examples in H. Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief* [KEK] 369-80; Lohfink 32-73). Paralleling this is 1 Thess 4:17 where those ‘who are alive, who are left, shall be **caught up together** in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air’ with the goal of unending union ‘with (σύν) the Lord.’ (v. 17b; cf. *Gos. Nicod.* 25 [Hennecke/Schneemelcher I, 475]; E. von Dobschütz, *Thessalonicherbriefe* [KEK] 197-202)¹³

The weight of evidence suggests that John is alluding to the deliverance of God’s people (Daniel 12:1) just preceding the Second Coming of Christ when God’s people are “rescued.”

In spite of this evidence, many ascribe this event to Christ’s ascension. This is problematic because:

- The **baby** is removed from planet earth – not as an **adult**, immediately after birth.
- The child is snatched or vigorously removed from planet earth (unlike the ascension narrative of Luke 24 and Acts).
- The ascension was not a supernatural rescue from Satan (as the Greek intimates for the child).
- Nothing relative to Christ’s name, life, Cross or resurrection is noted.¹⁴

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Bible Works* 9.

¹³ Bala-Schneider: “Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament with BYM morphology” (from Robinson-Pierpoint Greek New Testament), *Bible Works* 9.

¹⁴ Aune, *op. cit.*

THE WOMAN ESCAPES THE DRAGON

“And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days” (Revelation 12:6).

A similar *prophetic narrative* of this woman directly relating to persecution actually begins in verse 13. The insight here in verse 6 continues the introductory orientation of how the woman and the dragon became **apocalyptic signs**.

“And the woman fled (ephygen – G) into the wilderness.” (vs 6)

This picture of **fleeing** intimates that she **is**:

1. Escaping from the wrath of the dragon
2. The wilderness is a place of safety.
3. Something warns her to quickly “extricate” herself from a threatening situation.

This does not mean that the woman flees *after* the deliverance of her son. This is simply another snippet in that apocalyptic history.

The Fleeing Message

In the gospels Jesus noted that **when** you see the abomination that leads to desolation threaten God’s people and/or His church – “flee” (an imperative using the same root word (*ephygen*) as here in verse 6). There, they were to **flee** to the **mountains**. For the Jewish Christians it meant a literal escape across the Jordan to the hills of Pella in Decapolis in 66 A.D. The “mountains” were a divine, ordained place of protection. For God’s end-time people.

- In Luke 21:19, Christ advised His disciples, “*when ye shall see*” armies surrounding Jerusalem (symbolic of God’s people), **know** that desolation is near. The end is in sight.
- In a parallel narrative, Jesus notes (Mark 13:14-18), “*When ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken by Daniel the prophet standing where it ought not ... flee*” immediately.
- Lastly, the Mathian Olivet discourse additionally notes: “*When therefore ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken by Daniel the prophet ... stand in the holy place*” (Matthew 24:15), **flee** into the mountains (24:16).

In the Old Testament, mountains (hills) did have a wonderful symbolic meaning.

- They represented God’s power (Psalm 121:1-2), where God dwells (Mt. Zion) (Psalm 2:6, 135:21; Isaiah 8:18; Joel 3:21) and where God’s people can/will go for security and worship (Genesis 19:30, Isaiah 2:2-4, Ezekiel 7:16, Revelation 14:1).

- Additionally, Zion or Mount Zion represented Scriptures unique spiritual place for protection, a stronghold (II Samuel 5:7), where the “Lord our God” resides (Jeremiah 31:6). Zion is a mount that cannot be moved (Psalm 125:1). It is seen by Isaiah as a place of refuge (Isaiah 14:32), where God has located salvation (Isaiah 46:13)!
- The abomination in Daniel is a sin against the Sabbath through making a law supporting a false Sabbath (Daniel 8:13, 11:31-35, 12:11). When that is enacted, finding a place of safety is imperative.
- Those mountains symbolize a place of “spiritual safety” – just as the wilderness typifies.

How might the spiritual refuge of “mountains” that Christ is alluding to just before the Second Coming (*parousia*) tie to this “wilderness” metaphor?

When the hatred against God’s people comes with persecution (vs 13), the “escape” or “flee” imagery **here** is to a **wilderness**. This will be embellished more deeply later in the chapter. However, it echoes additional rich metaphors from the Old Testament, symbolizing again a place of safety!¹⁵

1. The time when Israel fled Egypt into the **wilderness**, they were protected and nourished (Exodus 16:32, Deuteronomy 2:7, 8:3, 15-16; Joshua 24:7; Psalm 78:5, 15, 19; Hosea 13:5).
2. The **wilderness** was also the “avenue” through which God guided Israel to the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 1:31, 9:7, 11:5).
3. It was even a place of protection “in the presence of their enemies” (Psalms 23 and 78).

“The motif of the *wilderness* was extremely important in Israelite and early Jewish literature. For the Qumran community, the desert retreat was a prelude to the final eschatological battle; see 1QM 1:1-3 (P. von der Osten-Saken, *Gott und Belial*, 20-41). The desert was traditionally regarded as a place of refuge in times of trouble (1 Kgs 17:2-3; 19:3-4).”¹⁶

This whole picture of “escaping” to a wilderness or mountain reflects **a divinely designated “place.”** When observing a threatening situation (spiritual and physical), get out of Babylon!

- “*And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.... And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, **Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues**” (Revelation 18:2, 4).*
- “Babylon will soon be destroyed (16:19) – for physical and spiritual protection, flee – get out! I have a refuge prepared for you.”
- This invitation – this command – is followed by God’s people. “She fled into the wilderness.”

¹⁵ Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

¹⁶ Aune, *op. cit.*, p. 691.

God's church was born through an exodus experience, where they escaped out of Egypt (symbolic of the sinful world), from the pursuit of the Israelites by Pharaoh.¹⁷ They were headed toward the wilderness but were still in Egypt (Exodus 14). This becomes a metaphor for the end-time church – the woman.

- God delivered them (Exodus 16, 19:1-2; Numbers 14:20-35; Deuteronomy 8:2).
- Just as the woman escapes into a wilderness experience, so the male child/seed will be delivered.

Now a “new Israel” – both Jews and Gentiles (Ephesians 2:11-22) enters her last wilderness experience.

“As the Israelites of old were cared for by God in the barren desert with manna and food and water and safety (Ex 16:4-5, 13; 17:3-7; 23:20), so now the church would be nourished and defended by God in her harsh and dangerous environment.”¹⁸

“where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there,” (vs 6)

The “geographical” escape is not to a random place – it is divinely chosen. “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her” (Hosea 2:14; cf. I Kings 17:2-3, 19:3-4). God's church finds there a **spiritual refuge**, where there is comfort and divine nourishment.

This word “**place**” is a metaphor as to what God specially prepares for the “latter-day Israel.” It does not imply that God will protect His church from persecution, temptation or even martyrdom (Revelation 6:9-11, 10:8-10, 11:2, 7-8, 13:7), **but** it is an assurance – a divine promise – that they will have **spiritual** protection and nourishment. A “table” will be set in the midst of their enemies (Psalm 23).¹⁹ The collective “flee” messages reveal a break-away from a sinful and spiritually threatening atmosphere! In the “wilderness protection,” they are divinely nourished.

“there a thousand two hundred and threescore days” (vs 6)

This timing period was introduced in the previous chapter. Its **structure** and **sequence** leads to beautiful information. They are all derived from “time of the end” clocks in Daniel 11 and 12. This period is alluded to as the “appointed time” – a *moed* (H) – a specially set-aside time to finish the work (cf. Daniel 8:19)! This is the sequence of events:

1. The unsealed portion (the *ha hazon* portion) of Daniel is open in Christ's hands (10:2).
2. He prophesies (future tense) while taking an oath to God the Father (cf. Daniel 12:7) that “*there should be time no longer [delayed]*” (10:6).
3. The judgment of the living (“*worshippers*”) is noted (11:1).
4. There is persecution for 42 months (11:2) (the **delay** has ended).

¹⁷ Ford, J. Massyngberde; *Revelation* (The Anchor Bible Doubleday, New York), pp. 551-552.

¹⁸ Brighton, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

¹⁹ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 464.

5. The two witnesses are active **1260 days** (11:3) (same period of time as here in 12:6).
6. Then, the Second Coming (11:12).

This is literal time, which was introduced in unequivocal language from the Hebrew portion of Daniel and echoes Daniel 7:25 (Aramaic). There is no reason here in verse 6 to change this established view. That will be riveted further in a repeat of this period, using a different timing expression in verse 14 with a different **functional** meaning – but the same period of time.

The 1260 days is the period that God's Spirit-driven witnesses are "prophesying" (Revelation 10:11, 11:3) or evangelizing the world with its last gospel call!

- In these "introductory verses" of chapter 12, God is making pristine clear two timing issues:
 1. Persecution will occur during a "*time times and half a time*" period, led by the antichrist (Revelation 12:14) (42 months – 11:2).
 2. The last gospel witnessing to the world is during a 1260-day period, that we are assured will be successful (11:5-6, 7a).

During this time, a wilderness experience will occur for God's people – but they will be spiritually protected.

Chapter 5

THE CHURCH'S KEY TO SPIRITUAL VICTORY

Revelation 12:11 is the last verse that gives an introductory view of God's church in its final move to be the "sign" of victory, clothed eternally in the righteousness of Christ.

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Revelation 12:11).

"The purpose of this verse, indeed the whole book, is to reveal the ultimate victory of the body of Christ over Satan through the Cross. God's people can be assured that satanic influences are 'a defeated power, however contrary it might seem to human experience.'"²⁰

The dragon may be able to hurt the body, but he cannot harm the soul. "The suffering of Christians is a sign, not of Satan's victory, but of the saints' victory over Satan because of their belief in the triumph of the cross, with which their suffering identifies them."²¹ This reflects why the woman could have a "*crown of victory*" in verse 1!

It may appear that the devil has obtained temporal power over their lives (11:7, 13:7), but the eternal reward will be in favor of the saints. "In 15:2 God's victors stand before the throne with

²⁰ Ladd, *Revelation*, p. 171, as quoted in Beale, p. 663.

²¹ Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 633.

harps and sing the song of Moses, a song of deliverance and victory [Revelation 15:3].”²²
We’ve already been assured that the saints would be vigorously “rescued” or delivered and will receive a place before God and His throne (vs 5).

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb” (vs 11)

The aorist *enikesan* “they overcame” is proleptic as is the narrative of 7:9, related to **the great multitude**. As in the overcomers noted within the seven churches, the message anticipates victory over Satan! Peace at last. He will be chained (imprisoned) (Revelation 20:1-5).

This victory is possible because of the “blood of the Lamb.” The theological key reveals that “they” – the saints – activated that cleaning blood in their lives.

What does this victory bring? The saints are legally permitted to use that blood as justification for acquittal in the heavenly courtroom. God then clears them of guilt. They are judged as overcomers. They are “made white in the blood of the Lamb” (7:14). They will not be harmed by the second death (2:11, 20:6).

“Christ was wrongfully accused and executed by Satan’s earthly pawns. But his resurrection vindicated that spilled blood in the law court of heaven and enabled him to take away the devil’s right and power as heavenly prosecutor (cf. 1:18): ‘I was dead, and, behold, I am living ... and [consequently] I have the keys of death and Hades.’”²³ Christ’s role as advocate (“defense attorney”) is affirmed (1 John 2:1, Hebrews 7:25). His blood is payment for our redemption.

“and by the word of their testimony;” (vs 11)

Because of Christ’s sacrifice unto death, God’s people have a great spiritual motivation to devote themselves to His service.²⁴ Looking deeper at this “witness and testimony” imagery in this apocalyptic book aids one’s insight in penetrating this phrase.

Jesus had a testimony (1:2, 9)

Because of this testimony He is called the “faithful and true Witness” (3:14; cf. 1:5, John 18:37).

Jesus’ testimony is also called the “spirit of prophecy” (19:10).

Contextually, the whole book of Revelation.

“Overcomers” had a testimony (12:10-11)

The believers are also called a “faithful witness” (19:10).

Their witness led John to even note that many were martyrs for that testimony (6:9, 12:11, 12:17, 20:4).²⁵

John also suffered because of the testimony of Jesus (1:9).

²² Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 475.

²³ Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 664.

²⁴ Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

²⁵ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 476.

Jesus' testimony was His witness of God's apocalyptic revelation that good will triumph over evil. The saints' testimony (*marturia*) is an evangelistic confession of Jesus and that prophetic Word.²⁶ It is contextually a witness for these end-time prophecies in Revelation!

“and they loved not their lives unto the death” (vs 11)

This phrase underscores the ultimate loyalty of God's last-day church – labeled more specifically as the “remnant” of the woman's seed (12:17). Jesus identified the need for this level of commitment (Luke 14:26; cf. Mark 8:34-35). This, in turn, links the believers to the fifth seal, when martyrs join the ranks of those who gave their “all” for Christ (6:9).

This echoes the mandate given to the Smyrna church: “*Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation **ten days**: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*” (Revelation 2:10). (“Ten” refers to the “time allotted,” the “complete period” that God has set aside. It is not a *literal* block of time.)

Clearly, this narrative is another story of Satan's defeat. The blood of the Lamb was the redemptive act that assured the saints of the ultimate hope of victory over the dragon. Then, “Their willingness to proclaim the message overcame even their natural fear of death.”²⁷

These overcomers represent, in reality, the individuals in all the seven churches.²⁸

The outcome of this story is the “great sign” of a pure, victorious woman, clothed in the light of Christ's righteousness.

[To be continued]

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²⁶ Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-136.

²⁷ Mounce, Robert H.; *The Book of Revelation* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1977), 239.

²⁸ Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 666.