

• A series of perspectives on the triumph of Christ and His kingdom

• The glorified Saviour

• The Lord of history

• Judgements on the world

• Victorious over the dragon

• Anger against the unrepentant

• The destroyer of godless Babylon

• New heavens and new earth

• Seals and trumpets

• A new scene unfolds in 11:19

The thought of the book of Revelation is not in chronological sequence but it goes round-and-round one point, showing how the Lord Jesus Christ will triumph in this world and bring in his final kingdom. Jesus does not start reigning when the final stage of his kingdom comes; he is reigning **now**. The churches of Roman Asia were being severely persecuted, but John was given a vision of the risen, glorified Lord Jesus Christ who is ruling in his churches and is capable of leading them to victory.

In Revelation 1:1–3:22 Jesus is seen as the glorified Saviour in the midst of his churches.

In Revelation 4:1–8:1 Jesus is the Lord of history, the one who opens the seven scrolls.

In Revelation 8:2–11:18 Jesus reigns amidst the judgements coming on the world, being announced by the trumpets of warning.

In Revelation 11:19–15:4 Jesus is victorious over the dragon.

In Revelation 15:5–16:21 Jesus is the one who expresses the anger of God against the unrepentant and he pours out bowls of wrath upon them.

In Revelation 17:1–19:10 Jesus is the destroyer of godless Babylon.

In Revelation 19:11–22:21 Jesus is Victor over sin and Satan and the One who brings the new heavens and new earth.

The seven churches, the seven seals and the seven trumpets have been the dominant topics of the three main sections so far. They have given us pictures of Christ as the high priest walking among his churches, Christ as the one who unfolds God's plan in the history of the world, Christ as the one who warns the world with trumpets of judgement.

Now in Revelation 11:19 a new scene unfolds. *Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant became visible inside his temple. Then there came flashes of lightning and loud noises and thunders and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.* Verse 19 does not belong to chapter 11; it belongs to chapter 12. The scene opens with John's seeing again into the throne-room of heaven. The tabernacle of ancient Israel was (among other things) a picture of heaven. The ark of the covenant was the representation of the holy presence of God. John sees into God's throne-room, the place where symbolically God acts as king and makes royal decisions. The flashes of lightning and loud noises and thunders and an earthquake and a great hailstorm all symbolize the majestic presence of God.

John sees a vision of the people of God

• Both Israel and the church
• The Messiah

John sees a vision of the people of God. ¹*And a great sign was seen in heaven. There appeared a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars upon her head.* ²*She was pregnant and she was crying out in pain, being in agony to give birth.* The woman represents the people of God, both in its pre-Christian form as Israel and its after-Jesus form as the Christian church. In the Old Testament Israel was occasionally pictured as a woman. Here the people of God are seen as a glorious people. She is clothed with the sun – marvellously radiant. She is adorned by the moon and the stars. The 'woman clothed with the sun' is about to give birth. That is, Israel was destined to bring forth the Christ-child, the Messiah born as a human baby.

John sees a vision of an enemy who hates the coming Christ-child

John sees a vision of an enemy who hates the coming Christ-child. ³*Then another sign appeared in heaven. Suddenly there appeared a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and with seven crowns upon his heads.* The dragon is Satan (as is clear from verse 9). His heads and horns and crowns speak of his power as a ruler (the symbolism comes from Daniel). His red colour speaks of the way he loves violence and the shedding of blood.

- The dragon
- The destroyer

⁴His tail dragged down one-third of the stars of heaven, and threw them to the earth. The dragon was once in heaven but fell from heaven, taking many of the angels of heaven with him. Although 'one-third' is not to be taken as a literal number, the idea is that Satan was once a sinless creature but rebelled (so becoming a 'dragon'), leading many angels in rebellion against God. As a result throughout Israel's history he hated the possibility of a Saviour coming to overthrow him. He was always ready to oppose the coming of the Christ-child. *Then the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, so that he might devour her child as soon as he was born.* The dragon is ready to destroy the child the moment he is born. We remember how Herod attempted to murder the baby Jesus.

Satan's enmity is defeated by Jesus' ascension

- Beyond reach



Satan's enmity is defeated by Jesus' ascension. Jesus was born in Israel. The woman delivered her child. ⁵*She gave birth to a son, a male child, who was destined to rule all the nations with a rod of iron. Then her child was taken up to God, and to his throne.* The vision passes over the life and death of Jesus and goes straight to his ascension. Satan could not kill Jesus permanently. He was raised and exalted to become God's King, ruling from God's throne. He is destined to rule the nations, and is safely enthroned in heaven beyond the reach of Satan's enmity.

Satan's enmity is directed towards the church

- An echo of Israel in the wilderness
- God provides for His people
- A period of persecution
- Protection from God's enemy

Satan's enmity is directed towards the church. ⁶*The woman fled into the wilderness where God had prepared for her a place where she might receive nourishment and care for 1,260 days.* The dragon cannot devour Christ. So he turns his hatred upon the church. But he cannot devour the church either, since she is protected by God throughout her life – during all of which Satan hates her and wishes to devour her. The picture echoes what happened to Israel immediately after the time of the redemption by the blood of the passover lamb. God's people were taken into the wilderness where God provided for them abundantly. Symbolically the church after the ascension of Jesus is in the same position. The people of God find this world to be a wilderness, yet God provides for them. The church needs protection for 1,260 days. This figure is sometimes called 'a time, times and half a time' (e.g. Daniel 7:25). Sometimes we have reference to three and a half years or forty-two (3½ x 12) months (13:5) or 1,260 (42 x 30) days. It was a symbolic way of speaking of a period of persecution. There was a very severe period when Ahab persecuted the people of God for about three and a half years. If the height of the persecution of Antiochus in the second century BC was also about three and a half years, it would make the phrase even more significant.

The church can never make peace with the world. Satan will always be her enemy. Yet at the same time the church of the Lord Jesus Christ has a never-ending promise of protection and provision.

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