**“WONDER WOMAN” REV. 12.**

The 12th chapter of Revelation begins with the statement: “And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of 12 stars”. From this description, “Wonder Woman” is certainly an appropriate description. Along with these characteristics, there are yet others also describing her.

 a. She is great with a child, ready to be delivered.

 b. She fled into the wilderness during her encounter with the dragon.

 c. She will live there for a period of 1260 years.

 d. She was given two wings of an eagle to fly into the wilderness with.

 e. She was persecuted by a great red dragon.

 f. The dragon cast a flood of water out of his mouth after her.

 g. The “earth” helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing up the flood.

The book of Revelation makes reference to three women in chapters 2, 12, and 17. Chapter 2 describes the false prophetess Jezebel as a condition of the church of Thyatira. Chapter 17 describes a woman as a great whore, riding on a scarlet colored beast. The other time a woman is mentioned is in chapter 12.

The woman of V1, is not the only “wonder in heaven” mentioned in this chapter. In V3, there appeared another wonder in heaven, and behold a great red dragon, having 7 heads and 10 horns and 7 crowns upon his heads. “**In heaven, a great red dragon with 7 heads and 10 horns”?** Are wild, mysterious, ferocious, monster beasts raised in that place theologians call “heaven”? What on earth (or is it heaven) is going on?

In Jer. 6:2, the Lord said, “I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman”. Then in Rev. 2:20, the “church” at Thyatira was accused of suffering “that woman Jezebel” which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. Clearly, from these two scriptures, a “comely and delicate woman” represents a pure, devoted, beautiful church, while a Jezebel type woman represents an apostate, corrupt church. In addition it is always possible for a woman (or a church) to once be pure and godly and later to fall away into corruption and spiritual whoredom. This was the case with Old Testament Israel and has also been the case with New Testament churches.

Next, since our lesson presents two wonders in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun and moon, and a dragon with 7 heavens and 10 horns, we need to ascertain what kind of “heaven” this is talking about. And yes, there are many varied uses and applications of the word heaven, as we have illustrated in our notes entitled “Important Symbols”, to which you are directed for more information on this.

The two wonders in heaven are an excellent illustration of “heaven” being used in a symbolic manner. If, as orthodox theology teaches, “heaven” is exclusively defined and described as the abode of God and the eternal dwelling place of the redeemed, then these two wonders provide a radical departure and contradiction of such description. Moreover, they prove beyond any question that the heaven described here is symbolic and not a literal dwelling place in the sky, where all is bright and fair, good and eternal. All you need to do to be convinced of this is to simply read the specific descriptions of the woman and the dragon, with the monstrous attributes and subsequent events related thereto. There is no possibility of a literal woman, clothed with the (literal) sun, moon and stars. And a literal dragon with 7 heads and 10 horns, and a tail long enough and strong enough to drag one third of the stars in the sky down and cast them in the earth, is a preposterous absurdity. Not to mention that the literal earth could not hold the stars. Without any question, this is a symbolic woman, a symbolic dragon, and necessarily therefore, a symbolic heaven. It is utterly futile to proceed with this chapter (and the rest of Revelation) until we have settled this question of symbolism and its employment in the interpretation of the visions of this prophecy.

Upon our recognition that we are dealing with symbols, we must then answer the question as to what is meant by this “heaven”. Allow me to offer some options for consideration. (1) First there is the “atmospheric heavens”; that is the blue sky above us with clouds, sun, moon and stars, etc. Genesis 1:8, 9, 14, & 20, clearly defines the firmament above us with (sun, moon and stars) and calls it heaven. In fact, no other scripture can be produced where God ever created any other physical place and called it heaven other than this atmospheric heaven. I call your attention to the fact that there is not even the remotest suggestion that this created heaven has any of the component parts and description which orthodox theology attributes to a “place called heaven”. In addition, Gen. 2:1, defines and incorporates all of the component construction of this creation as the “host” of heaven and earth, thereby pre-empting the application of this term ”host of heaven” to white robed, winged creatures of the sky. (2) Another use of the term “heaven” in the Bible refers to a “political” heaven or arena. An example would be referring to the presidency of the United States as being “heaven”. It would mean ascending to a high, lofty elevation in the political world. In Isaiah, chapters 13 and 14, judgments were pronounced upon Babylon and her king. Babylon that was so elevated in its political dominion, along with king Nebuchadnezzar that once said: “is not this great Babylon that I have built with the power of my might”, was, as it were, exalted to heaven. Another example is in Mt. 11:23, where our lord refers to Capernaum as being “exalted to heaven”, meaning she had a high and lofty of attitude herself. Pharoah dwelt in a political heaven. He once said who is the Lord that I should hearken to him? Roman emperors called themselves gods, denoting their elevation above all, even to being worshipped. They were in a political heaven. (3) A third use of the term heaven is in the spiritual realm. The old church hymn, “Higher Ground”, conveys the idea that to be delivered from the mire of sin and be saved by God’s love, is a lofty elevation. Not an elevation of a self-exalted feeling, but a transformation from earthly, sensual living, to higher, nobler, spiritual relationships. This is illustrated in Eph. 1:3, and 2:6, where a saving relationship with Christ is described as “being raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”. We are transformed from the kingdom of darkness, to the kingdom of God’s dear Son. This thought can be illustrated by this question: “Which is the highest spiritual life, the one lived in the gutter of sin, or the one lived in harmony with God”? It has absolutely nothing to do with an “holier than thou” attitude, and everything to do with a relationship that walks on the king’s highway with the Lord. To extend the thought further, there are times of discouragement in the Christian life, and also times of being on the mountain top with Christ. It is a heavenly relationship or condition and not geography.

There may be other uses of the term heaven but this will help us see that it is not just a reference to “streets of gold” beyond the realm of space. Now we must determine what kind of heaven(ly) elevation the woman and the dragon are seen to be in. This will aid us greatly in arriving at an understanding of the vision of chapter 12. Before we do that though, there are some other descriptions, identifications and events related to these two wonders in heaven, that we must take note of in order to interpret the vision properly.

**Other marks of this vision.**

1. The woman was travailing in the birth of a child.

2. The dragon stood before the woman to devour her child as soon as it was born.

3. She brought forth a man child that would rule all nations with a rod of iron.

4. The child was caught up to God’s throne (as soon as it was born?).

5. The woman flew away into “the” wilderness.

6. She will be fed there for 1260 days (1260 years).

7. There was war “in heaven” between Michael and the dragon.

8. The dragon was cast out of heaven into the earth.

9. The dragon persecuted the woman who gave birth to a child.

10. The woman was given two wings of a great eagle.

11. These wings would enable her to fly into the wilderness, where she would be fed for a time, times and half a time.

12. “From the face of the earth”.

13. The dragon (serpent) cast a flood of water out of his mouth after the woman, to wash her away in its wake.

14. The earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood.

15. The dragon was mad with the woman and the rest of the seed, which keep the commandments of God.

The formidable task before us now is to identify this woman, her child and the dragon, and to do so within the bounds of all the other marks of identification of the vision. In the process of this we are going to delay the specific identification of the 7 heads and 10 horns of this lesson until a future lesson. The reason for this is to allow incorporation of the 7 heads and 10 horns, of chapters 13 and 17, along with those of this chapter. There is a distinct correlation between all of these heads and horns of chapters 12, 13, and 17, and it will be advantageous to treat them all in one separate lesson. Neither will this delay impede our treatment of the rest of the visions of these chapters, but will more thoroughly confirm our findings of the other portions of these 3 chapters when we bring them all together.

The major object of this chapter is the “wonder woman”, seen in “heaven”. This woman is also seen:

 a. Clothed with the sun; standing on the moon and a crown of 12 stars on her head;

 b. Bearing a child;

 c. Fleeing into the wilderness;

 d. Being persecuted by the dragon;

 e. In the wilderness for 1260 years;

 f. And, a flood of water out of the dragon’s mouth after the woman.

Earlier in this lesson we discussed the symbolic use of “woman” in scripture. Recall that a pure woman represented a good, vibrant and pure church and a dissolute, adulterous woman represented an apostate, fallen church. We also have provided you with some important words used in a symbolic fashion, among them the word “heaven”.

This chapter begins with a great wonder in heaven and that wonder is a woman. The most outstanding wonder about the woman is her appearance. (Apart from this lesson, the appearance of any woman is her most recognizable distinction). In this case, the woman is clothed with the sun with the moon under feet and a crown of 12 stars on her head. Research through the many available Bible commentaries does not offer much help, if any, with who or what this woman is. Some have pictured her as the virgin Mary; some as a generality of the O.T. and the N.T. saints, with no explanation of the symbols; and others just skip over her presence and attributes without meaningful comments to offer us who, gazing upon this wonder, long for a spiritual explanation of what God is trying to “reveal”. What a great opportunity to emphasize the necessary function of symbols and history in the application of prophetic scriptures, rather than subjecting them to the random, wandering agendas born of the novel and capricious imaginations of religious minds and traditions.

There is no way to avoid the conclusion that this woman and her appearance is symbolic. No literal woman could be literally wearing the sun, standing on the literal moon, and 12 literal stars on her head. But when you turn to a symbolic, historic application, you immediately know that this woman represents the “early” New Testament Church. She is clothed with the sunlight of the glorious gospel. She is standing upon the moon, the lesser light that borrows all of its light from the sun, which represents the law fulfilled, and yet is a distinct garment of the church. Those 12 luminaries, stars, crowning her head, giving light to her pathway, represents the teachings of the 12 apostles of Christ. Her light is undimmed by a dependency upon creeds and dogmas, which later darkened her brilliance and confused her path. She stands out in resplendent “wonder” of the recent experience of the Pentecostal baptism of the Holy Ghost and the glorious message of a risen Lord Jesus and the “shinning” example of Christ-like life. This is that early, apostolic age of the church when her light was not hidden under a bushel of Roman doctrines, but was covering land and sea, carrying the sun light of salvation to all the world, the Lord working with them in signs and “wonders”.

This “heaven” where this “wonder woman” is, by her very identification as the embodiment of the early church, the espoused bride of Christ, is not in the atmospheric heavens and certainly not the political heavens, but is instead, in that spiritual heaven of the redeemed; the church of Jesus Christ upon this earth. Paul describes in Eph. 2:6 an heavenly relationship such as this great wonder which appears here. She is not in a city in the geographic sky, clothed with the sun, moon and stars, and having a baby there, of all things. She is both in and of the kingdom of heaven, which Jesus preached as being near at hand during his ministry, and beautifully illustrated in his sermon on the mount, Mt. 5-7. She is that “Jerusalem which is above, which is the mother of us all”. She is that city set on a hill, shining with the brilliance of the sun light of the gospel of our salvation. She is a city that has no need of the light of the (literal) sun, for the glory of God and of the lamb are her light.

And she, being great with child, cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. What child is this, which the N.T. church is carrying, and is in pain, travailing for it to be delivered? It cannot be Christ, as some suppose, inasmuch as the church did not give birth to Christ, but Christ gave birth to the church. As this church, clothed with the sun, moon and stars, marched on in time with her mission of carrying the gospel to a (Pagan) world, what was she seeking deliverance from that was causing her such pain? The sequel to that question is what was she delivered from and who did she deliver? We will suspend those questions for a short while, leaving them with the pain of the woman, while our attention is drawn to ---

**Another wonder which appeared in heaven.** Behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns upon his heads. What monster is this? We know that there is no such literal creature. The dictionary describes a dragon as a product of myths, legends and fairy tales. The Greek word for dragon is: **drakon,** which means a “fabulous kind of serpent”. The Hebrew word is: **tanniym**, which means “a marine or land monster”, serpent or whale. In mythology it is pictured as a huge creature with an especially long tail, scaly body, claw feet, breathing fire out of its nostrils. We will provide here two quotes that will help us determine what the symbolism (for it is necessarily symbolic) of this great red dragon is.

***In the eighth chapter of the prophet Daniel, God represented the kingdom of the Greeks by a he goat for no other apparent reason than this, that it was the national military standard of the Grecian monarchy: we may therefore expect the pagan Roman empire is called a dragon on a similar account. In confirmation of this point it is very remarkable that the dragon was the principal standard of the Romans, next to the eagle, in the second, third, fourth and fifth centuries of the Christian era. Arrian is the earliest writer who has mentioned that dragons were used as military standards among the Romans.***

***The first standard of the whole legion is the eagle, which the aquilifer carries. Dragons are also borne to battle by the draconarii. As a legion consists of ten cohorts, there were, therefore, ten draconarii to one aquilifer: hence from the greater number of draconarii in an army, the word signarii, standard-bearers, came at last to mean the carriers of the dragon-standards only, the others retaining the name of aquiliferi The heathen Roman empire is called a red dragon, and accordingly, we find from the testimony of ancient writers, that the dragon-standards of the Romans were painted red.***

With the woman identified as the early years of the N.T. church, and with the dragon appearing on the same time stage, along with the other subsequent points of the vision, all supported by these quotes from history, we can also identify the dragon as “Pagan Rome”. This may evolve into some other form of beast over the ensuing years, just as the pure N.T. woman will evolve into the “great whore that sitteth upon many waters”, of the 17th chapter.

At the point where the woman was introduced to us, she was in “pain” and “travail” with child to be delivered, and with the great red dragon waiting to devour her child (offspring) as soon as it is born. This “pain” and “travail” points us to the years of Roman imperial persecution, beginning with Nero and lasting through Diocletion. These persecutions were ended by Constantine in 313 AD. At this point the beautiful, brilliant, sun-clothed church is undergoing a transformation of its faith and worship from its original apostolic purity, to a mixture of “baptized paganism”. Bishops of larger churches are asserting authority over smaller ones, barbaric conversions are compromising faith and pagan gods and myths are gaining a foot hold in the methods of worship. In addition the church has endured over 250 years of imperial torment, torture and martyrdom. They are ready for deliverance.

In this setting the then ruling emperor, Constantine, faced a decisive battle of war. He claimed to have seen a sign of a cross in the sky with the words, “in this sign conquer”. Constantine was victorious and subsequently he professed to become a Christian. (The genuineness of his conversion is questioned by many historians and even subsequent history raises questions about it). Nevertheless, the emperor of (pagan) Rome now bears the insignia of the cross. In 313 AD, Constantine issued the edict of Milan, providing equality of Christianity with all other religions of the empire. The new “Christian” emperor has been elevated to the highest, most prominent position in the church; caught up as it were, to the throne where God dwelt among his people. This was a new day in Rome and also in the church. But it did not bode good for the future of the church.

We have proposed that the sun-clothed woman is a symbol of the church of Pentecost and the first century power, glory and purity she received from the risen Lord. As she progresses through the following years, imperial persecution set in by way of the red dragon, a symbol of Pagan, imperial Rome. This persecution brought on unbearable pain, coupled with the conception of the church with a desire to be delivered from those persecutions. This travail would end only upon deliverance of the child. (Remember we are talking about a woman who represents the church, and a child is to be brought forth by this woman (church). We only need then to go to the ending of this travail and pain (persecution by the empire) to look for a child, brought forth by the church. As previously noted, that child cannot possibly be Jesus Christ, as Dr. Van Impe declared in his book “Revelation Revealed”, along with many others who hold this view. This prophecy, written approximately 65 years after the crucifixion, is not about Christ being born of Israel. Further, the woman in her description cannot possibly be Israel. On the other hand, at the end of her persecution by imperial Rome, at the point where that persecution ended, we have Constantine professing Christianity and bringing an end to 250 years of pain and travail. Constantine is that man child, produced by the church which (by 313) was seriously deteriorating into baptized paganism. Constantine saw himself as head of the church, or in the description of verse 5, he was caught up to God and his throne. This could not possibly mean a transport to an outer space city in the sky, since he was to “rule all nations with a rod of iron”, which is exactly what Constantine did.

Having identified these two wonders with the woman representing the church and the dragon representing pagan Rome, and the child born of the woman as Constantine, we will deal with the other parts of the vision in less detail and shorter specificity of identification.

V6. The woman, after the birth of her child, fled into the wilderness. This symbolizes the church descending into the dark-age wilderness of Roman corruption and abominations. This wilderness experience is for 1260 years, and is the same 1260 years of the sackcloth testimony of God’s two witnesses and of the treading under foot of the holy city of ch. 11:2-3. That time frame is 529AD, to 1789 AD.

V7. There was war in heaven between the dragon and Michael. This symbolizes the struggle between the receding popularity and power and practice of paganism on the one hand, and the rising popularity of the (now spiritually worldly) church on the other hand. The “heaven” of this battle is in the same spiritual arena as previously described.

V8-9. The dragon could not prevail. That is, paganism lost. It was cast out into the “earth” (a lesser domain). Instead of being high in the ecclesiastical realm, paganism was cast out from 380 to 529, when it was totally outlawed by the laws of emperor Justinian. Note: The terms dragon, devil, serpent, satan, are all the same and are symbols of paganism. For comparison, review the story of Babylon being cast down under the symbol of Lucifer being cast out of heaven in Is. 13 & 14.

 V13. The dragon persecuted the woman. This is a repeat of the thoughts of the war between Michael and the dragon in verses 7-9.

V15. The dragon cast a flood of water out of his mouth after the woman. While this dragon was still in its lofty place and was at war with the woman, a “flood” (waters symbolize peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues, ch. 17:15) came out from it after the woman. During the 4th and 5th centuries there was a flood of barbaric (peoples) tribes that over ran the empire, and flooded the church with forced conversions, and accomplished two things. By their forced conversion into the church, they became anti-pagan, and thus at war with them. By their superficial conversion to Christianity, they aided the “flight of the woman into the wilderness”, that is the descent of Christianity into the abyss of Romanism.

V16. The earth opened its “mouth” (what mouth?) and swallowed up the flood. Already the dragon has been cast out into the earth (V9). That is, he was cast down from his ruling, religious position as pagan Rome. Now the earth has swallowed up the multitude of barbarians over running the empire. The empire absorbed them into its domain.

V17. The spirit of paganism was cast out, but also absorbed within the paganized worship and doctrines of the Roman church. This spirit of paganism, through icons, image worship, adoration of Mary, saint worship, purgatory, priesthood, transubstantiation, papal infallibility and more, waged a continual war against those who “keep the commandments of Jesus”.

The woman was first beautiful and pure; then persecuted; then delivered; then she flew away into the dark-age wilderness. The next time we shall see her, she won’t be clothed with the sun, moon and stars. She will have become the “great whore that sitteth upon many waters”, ch. 17. As we pointed out earlier, a woman can be beautiful and pure, and that same woman can fall into drunkenness, harlotry and a multitude of sins. So it is also with the church through the ages. That has been the sad story of the Christian church that Christ died to give life to. She was founded in beauty, power, the sun light of the gospel, the life saving experience of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and the hope of the return of the Lord and eternal life. Along her journey from that beginning, she became influenced by methods of the (pagan) world about her. Then greed for power set in. A departure from biblical truth unto the methods of pagan ritual and worship, enforced by the papal system, and the church sunk to immorality and abominable practices. She floundered in the corruption of this system until the advent of the reformation. This brought the church to the time when Roman papal tyranny was finally thrown off and the word of God was restored to the church and the common people. With this came a new day of spiritual awakening which returned the church to much the same glory and beauty of the first century church. Today, we need that return again.