

Revelation 12:1-17
 God on the Throne
 RV1615

May 8, 2016 AM
 Revelation

“The Central Event”
 - War In Heaven –

INTRODUCTION: I make it my practice to read through the Book of Revelation once every quarter.

1. ... and, if possible, in one sitting.
2. This last book of the Bible provides us with the *God-perspective* I need in my life and this world.
3. The **central vision** of the Book of Revelation is found in Rev. 12-14 (**see chart**)
 - a) *War in Heaven*
 - b) This Vision reaches *back* into chapters 1-11, and the first three *visions*, to explain why the Christian life and mission on earth is both so difficult and so dangerous. *The outward realities of life.*
 - c) Then this vision reaches *Forward* into chapters 15- 22, and then the last three visions to explain why God will come to both judge and destroy the world. *The Deeper reality of life.*
 - d) **Chapter 12 is the central vision in the book of Visions.**
4. There is a *literary structure* that is more designed, more deliberate and more determinative than *any other Book in the Bible* –
 - a) A Book with 7 *visions* (with a central vision)
 - b) **Amazingly:** each has 7 *visions* within each Big Vision.
 - c) Vision 1 (ch. 1-3) The *Seven Churches* of Revelation
 - d) Vision 2 (ch. 4-7) The *Seven Seal* Judgments
 - e) Vision 3 (ch. 8-11) The *Seven Trumpet* Judgments
 - f) Vision 4 (ch. 12-14) – The Central Vision: *Seven Signs of Warfare*

Leon Morris: *Revelation TNTC, p. 151*

We might expect that the seventh trumpet will lead into the seven last plagues. This proves not to be the case however. In between come another series of visions which we may call ‘seven significant signs’. There is no common factor like seals or trumpets or bowls and some prefer not to see them as a series. But it is unlikely that there should be just seven unrelated visions. It seems that John intends them to be seen as a series. This group of visions is concerned with the troubles of the church.

 - g) Vision 5 (ch. 15-16) The *Seven Bowl* Judgments
 - h) Vision 6 (ch. 17-19) The *Seven Laments* over the Fall of Babylon
 - i) Vision 7 (ch. 20-22) *Seven Visions* of the New Heaven and Earth

5. **Note This:** There are 404 verses in Revelation. So, at verse #202 we reach the *middle point/center* of the Book.

- a) Actually, between verses 202 and 203
- b) This occurs in Chapter 12
- c) **Verse 202** = Revelation 12:7

Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, (Rev. 12:7)

- d) **Verse 203** = Revelation 12:8

but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. (Rev. 12:8)

6. **The Centerpiece** of the Revelation of John is *The Cosmic War in Heaven* (chapter 12) and the *defeat of Satan* (in 12:7-8)! This is the center point of the central vision:

Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. (Rev. 12:7-8)

7. **Robert Mounce:** *Revelation: NICNT; p. 234*

Chapter 12 marks a major division in the book of Revelation. Before the seven last plagues of chapter 16, in which the wrath of God is finished (15:1), John turns aside to explain the underlying cause for the hostility about to break upon the church. It is the age-long conflict between God and Satan which accounts for the persecution the church is to experience. Although the crucial battle was won when Christ arose victorious over death and the grave, the adversary continues his struggle. By laying bare the root cause of persecution John would encourage believers to hold fast in the coming tribulation. The death struggle of a defeated foe will bring severe tribulation, but the outcome is certain – God will come in judgment to destroy his enemies and reward his own.

8. **Hear me:** Revelation 12:1-17 is *THE* most important chapter in all of Scripture. To understand Revelation 12:1-17 is to grasp these **Seven** insights –

- a) How the whole Bible fits together.

*The Lord God said to the serpent,
“Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all livestock
and above all beasts of the field;
on your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.
I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.” (Gen. 3:14-15)*

- b) Why life is an ongoing conflict between good and evil.

We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. (1 John 5:19)

- c) Why human history is the story of war.

And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. (Matt. 24:6)

- d) Why the World always hates the Church

If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (John 15:18-19)

- e) What the Gospel is all about: *The Kingdom of God*

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:15)

- f) Why it is so difficult to be a Christian.

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:22)

- g) What is the source of Christian Hope.

And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:17)

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” (Rev. 11:15)

9. This **one, magnificent, panoramic** chapter puts everything into the *God-perspective*. And now we know why John began his Book of Revelation with these words –

- a) *Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near. (Rev. 1:3)*

- b) ... and ends it the same way ...

- c) *I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. (Rev. 22:18-19)*

10. This **Central Chapter** has three paragraphs presenting three pictures –

- a) The True Story of the Nativity (12:1-6)
 b) The True Nature of War (12:7-12)
 c) The True History of the Church (12:13-17)

I. UNDERSTANDING THE PICTURES OF REVELATION 12

A. The True Story of the Nativity (12:1-6)

1. *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. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. 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. 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, 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. (Rev. 12:1-6)*
2. The “mystery of Christmas” (**J. Ramsey Michaels: IVP; p. 147**) is revealed to us in **five** ways in the New Testament.

- a) **First:** As the story of poor shepherds finding a Savior in Bethlehem (Luke 2:1-20)

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” (Luke 2:8-12)

- b) **Second:** the story of fulfilled prophecy and the visit of some mysterious Magi from the East (Matthew 2:1-12)

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” ... When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. (Matt. 2:1-2, 10-11)

- c) **Third:** In John’s Gospel, the story is summarized as God Incarnate, invading a dark world, to bring to mankind both light and life (John 1:1-18)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:1-5)

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

- d) **Fourth:** Mark’s Gospel doesn’t have a nativity story, but alludes to Jesus’ incarnation (becoming flesh or human) as the Kingdom of God invading the world.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:14-15)

- e) The **Fifth Story** surprises us: It is the story of a woman, a baby boy and a great Red Dragon. *This is the Nativity Story from God's perspective.*

(1) *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. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. 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. (Rev. 12:1-4)*

(2) **J. Ramsey Michaels:** *Revelation: IVP; p. 147*

Whenever we look, the mystery of Christmas is linked to danger and to the ancient conflict between good and evil.

3. Here is the **True-True Nativity Story**, how heaven saw the birth of Jesus of Nazareth –

- a) It begins with a beautiful, radiant woman –

(1) *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. (Rev. 12:1)*

(2) Who is this woman?

(3) Is it Eve? Some think so because of the promise of the *Protoevangelion* (first gospel) about Eve's son and the devil

*The Lord God said to the serpent,
"Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all livestock
and above all beasts of the field;
on your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.
I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel." (Gen. 3:14-15)*

(4) Others say it is Mary, the mother of Jesus: This is a typical way *Roman Catholics* depict Mary in art and statue form. She did give birth to the Christ.

(5) But the picture ("*great sign*") of the Radiant woman points to The People of God.

(i) OT Israel and NT Church ...

(ii) She is OT Israel

- *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. (Rev. 12:1)*
- her imagery is borrowed from Joseph's dream in Genesis 37:1-9
- *Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?" And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind. (Gen. 37:9-11)*
- *The Sun and Moon: Jacob and Rachel, his parents*
- *The 12 stars: the 12 sons of Jacob; the 12 Tribes of Israel.*

(iii) She is also the NT Church.

(iv) **Grant R. Osborne:** *Revelation: ECNT*; p. 456

Therefore, it seems likely that the woman here represents Israel, the people of God (with 12:17, where she represents the church, we can conclude that she represents the whole people of God, Israel and the church).

b) She is in great labor, about to give birth to the Messiah, Jesus Christ –

- (1) *She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. 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. (Rev. 12:2-4)*
- (2) Revelation 12:2 is a reference to all the tribulation Israel went through in the OT, as God and Satan fought over her, as she prepared to give birth to the Jewish baby boy Jesus of Nazareth.
- (3) Rev. 12:4 is a reference to Christ's dangerous birth: *Herod's attempt to kill the Christ-child.*
- (4) and ... his death, resurrection and ascension: *"but her child was caught up to God and to his throne."*
- (5) There is a clear reference to OT prophecies about the rule of Christ in the Kingdom of God. (Rev. 12:5)
 - *"And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,*

*are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’”
(Matt. 2:6)*

- *The Lord says to my Lord:
“Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool.”
The Lord sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter.
Rule in the midst of your enemies! (Ps. 110:1-2)*
- *I will tell of the decree:
The Lord said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.
Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.
You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a
potter's vessel. (Ps. 2:7-9)*

c) A Great Dragon (second great sign) awaits the woman and her messianic son – to destroy them both

(1) *And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. 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. (Rev. 12:3-4)*

(2) He has 7 heads and 10 horns – his own arrogant authority and destructive power of his dark domain.

(3) His tail has dragged into his Satanic Kingdom a third of the stars (“star” = angel)

(4) The dragon is later revealed for who he is ...

- *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. (Rev. 12:9)*
- *the ancient serpent of Genesis 3*
- *the devil: from the Greek *diabolos* (diabolical)*
- *Satan: the Greek *Satanas**
- *the deceiver of the whole world = the Liar*
- *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. (1 John 5:19)*

d) But God helps the woman (Israel) by preparing for her a place of hiding and protection – the wilderness.

(1) *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. (Rev. 12:6)*

(2) *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. 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. (Rev. 12:13-14)*

(3) **Note:** 1,260 days = a time, times and half a time = 42 months = 3 ½ years

(4) Symbolical: 7 years = the completion of time

(i) 3 ½ years = OT era

(ii) 3 ½ years = NT era

e) **We need to see something here:** *When God sent Israel into times in the wilderness these periods appeared to be judgments to us, but they were really times of protection; from God's point of view: Protection, Growth, Purification.*

(1) like a child confined to the fenced-in backyard in order to protect him, allow him to grow up and learn not to play in the street.

(2) *40 years in the Wilderness:* time to purge Egyptian idolatry out of Israel and prepare her to enter the Promised Land.

(3) *70 years in Captivity in Babylon:* time to purge idolatry out of Israel, and prepare her to receive the Messiah.

(4) **Why?** *Because Israel was an incubator to give birth to the Messiah and nurture Him as a child. Therefore, Israel could not be idol-worshippers, for then the Messiah could not have been born to Her! God was protecting Israel from the Dragon, purging her of idolatry, preparing for Jesus, so He could save the world through Israel's son!*

(5) **Note:** *Israel is now in a wilderness – cut off and put aside because they rejected Jesus as the Messiah. But, once again, this is only a temporary purging –*

Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written,

*“The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”;
“and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”*

(Romans 11:25-27)

f) **The question is obvious:** Why such hatred of the Dragon for the woman and her son?

g) The Answer: *The War in Heaven!*

B. The True Nature of War (12:7-12)

1. *Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. 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. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!” (Rev. 12:7-12)

2. John now goes way, way back in time, between Genesis 2 and Genesis 3, to explain how *sin*, and *evil*, and *spiritual warfare* got into our world ...

a) *And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. (Gen. 1:31-2:3)*

b) **The Five most chilling words in the Bible:** “*Now war arose in heaven ...*”

c) *Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. 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. (Rev. 12:7-9)*

d) Here is how it happened ...

(1) Lucifer, the Moring Star, decided he wanted to be God, and so he sought to dethrone God ...

*“How you are fallen from heaven,
O Day Star, son of Dawn!
How you are cut down to the ground,
you who laid the nations low!
You said in your heart,
‘I will ascend to heaven;
above the stars of God
I will set my throne on high;
I will sit on the mount of assembly
in the far reaches of the north;
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High.’
But you are brought down to Sheol,
to the far reaches of the pit. (Isaiah 14:12-15)*

(2) A third of the Angels joined Lucifer (Satan) in his rebellion (v. 12:3)

- (3) *Michael the Archangel* and 2/3 of the Angels fought against Lucifer and 1/3 of the Angels turned into demons.
- (4) They were “*cast down to the earth*”
- e) They soon went off to make war against **Adam and Eve**, and caused mankind to rebel against God.
- f) **But** ... the Son of the Woman (Jesus) also came down to earth and saved mankind by means of his perfect life, his sacrificial death on the cross, and his resurrection and ascension!
- g) Satan’s power was crushed: *The Power of death through sin.*
- (1) *And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” (Luke 10:18-20)*
- (2) *Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. (John 16:7-11)*
- (3) *Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. (1 Cor. 15:24-26)*
- (4) *When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:*
- “Death is swallowed up in victory.”*
- “O death, where is your victory?”*
- O death, where is your sting?”*
- The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15:54-57)*
- (5) *Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:8)*
- h) This victory of Jesus Christ, began on Good Friday when Jesus died on the cross; sealed in power when Jesus rose from the dead; continues on in the *mission, martyrdom and witness* of the Church ...
- i) **The Power of the Gospel ...**

- (1) *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16)*
- (2) *And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. (Rev. 12:10-11)*

j) A Gospel truth with two sides to it ...

- (1) *Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!" (Rev. 12:12)*
- (2) **Joy** to Christians over their victory in Christ!
- (3) **Woe** to the world because of the tirade of the Devil!

C. The True History of the Church (12:13-17)

1. *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. 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. The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. 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. 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. (Rev. 12:13-17)*
2. Satan, after he was cast out of heaven, pursued Israel to destroy her and prevent the salvation of God from taking place.

a) *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. (Rev. 12:13)*

b) God took Israel out of the "line of fire" by placing her in her present "wilderness"

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. The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. 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. (Rev. 12:14-16)

c) **Simon J. Kistemaker:** *Revelation: NTC*; p. 368

John writes that the woman is kept from the presence of the serpent for a specified period: "for a time, times and a half time," which is three and a half years. This reference is taken from Daniel 7:25 and 12:7 and is a time span which equals that of the forty-two months and the 1,260 days mentioned by John elsewhere. In Revelation, this period refers not literally but symbolically to the interval between Jesus' first and second comings as

the interim of the forty-two months or the 1,260 days. It is the period in which the serpent of deception rules the world; this time definitely comes to an end when God intervenes.

d) Paul calls this NT era: “*The fullness of the Gentiles*”

(1) i.e., the years for the evangelism of the Gentile nation

(2) the Present age of World Missions

(3) Then Israel will be saved

Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written,

*“The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”
(Rom. 11:25-26)*

3. **Now ... Hear this!** Enraged at God and frustrated that his demonic plan has failed, Lucifer goes off to make war on “*the rest of her offspring*” –

a) The spiritual children of OT Israel = the NT Church

b) *You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’*
(Acts 3:25)

c) The **cause** of all the persecution of the Church ...

d) .. even to this day.

4. But a limited persecution: “... *because he knows his time is short.*” (12:12)

5. This is the **history of the church:** witness, warfare, persecution and suffering, and victory!

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.
(Rev. 12:17)

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.” (Rev. 12:10-11)

II. THE APPLICATION OF THE PICTURES OF REVELATION 12 ...

A. The Church of Jesus Christ is Ever at war, but Never doing Business

1. We cannot run our churches like small businesses, selling religious goods and spiritual services, and keeping the customers happy! This is the American Evangelical way of “doing church”; but it’s not reality!

For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ. (2 Cor. 2:17)

2. *We are in the **fight of our lives!** As long as we are ...*

- a) The People of God
- b) The Children of Mother Church
- c) The Brothers and Sisters of Messiah Jesus

... we will be at war, persecuted, in tribulation!

3. *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim. 3:12-15)*

4. If we have people get upset and leave the church; people attack, sue and slander our church; people hate your pastors, oppose your elders and ridicule and reject our members – **Good!**

5. **When everybody loves us and when we are popular all the time, we are in trouble:** *This means we've sued the world for peace and gone silent with the Gospel.*

6. Listen to King Jesus!

Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets. (Luke 6:26)

B. The Discipline you receive from God, which sends you into some spiritual wilderness for a season, is not God's rejection of you, but proof of His purifying love!

1. *It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Heb. 12:7-11)*

2. *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. (1 Peter 4:12-13)*

For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And

*“If the righteous is scarcely saved,
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”*

Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. (1 Peter 4:17-19)

3. Your Father in Heaven loves you: *You've simply been spanked, banished to the back yard, and sent to bed without your super!*

4. God is purging you of idolatry, perfecting you in holiness, and getting you ready to enter the Promised Land – **Heaven!**

C. We cannot fight a defensive war or call for détente.

1. *And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. (Rev. 12:11)*
2. If we become silent, ashamed of the Gospel and afraid to speak the Word of the Cross to a hostile world, we lose –
 - a) *We lose our moment in history to serve Christ*
 - b) *We lose the souls of men – especially our children and grandchildren*
 - c) *We lose the reward of the witness of Jesus.*
3. If we try to play it safe and avoid controversy, persecution or martyrdom, we lose
 - a) We lose our very own souls
 - b) *And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” (Mark 8:34-38)*
4. **Hear me:** When we are persecuted we are **not** *Victims*; we **are** *Victors* ...
 - a) *And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. (Rev. 12:11)*
 - b) The Christless world who persecutes us are the *Victims*
 - c) We who love God and are loved by Christ are the *Victors*
 - d) *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8: 35-39)*

D. Our Sins did not Cause this Cosmic Warfare; Satan’s sin brought on this Cosmic Conflict

1. Our sins are merely a reminder of our bad choices to side with Lucifer against the Kingdom of God.
2. As long as Satan is in existence and in the world there will be cosmic conflict, spiritual struggle, and wars everywhere we look.
3. This is when the Great War will end ...

And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched up over the broad

plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Rev. 20:7-10)

4. **Today ... Here ... Right now ...** Is the time to decide whose side you will be on – for the rest of your life and forever:
- a) The Great Loser ... Satan and the World, or ...
 - b) The Great Victor ... Christ and His Church

5. Here is the Great Question: “*Who Is On the Lord’s Side?*”

Who is on the Lord’s side? Who will serve the King?

Who will be His helpers, other lives to bring?

Who will leave the world’s side? Who will face the foe?

Who is on the Lord’s side? Who for Him will go?

By Thy call of mercy, by Thy grace divine,

We are on the Lord’s side—Savior, we are Thine!

Fierce may be the conflict, strong may be the foe,

But the King’s own army none can overthrow;

’Round His standard ranging, vict’ry is secure,

For His truth unchanging makes the triumph sure.

Joyfully enlisting, by Thy grace divine,

We are on the Lord’s side—Savior, we are Thine!