



INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 12

PHYSICAL/SPIRITUAL PARALLELS

The great parallel between Israel and the church is vitally important in understanding the symbols used in this chapter. The part of this parallel that helps us interpret this chapter is the section dealing with the wilderness wanderings.

A Parallel Comparison of Israel and the Church

Israel	REDEEMER	Moses 	Nourished on Manna	JORDAN	Promised Land
Bondage in Egypt		Israel in Wilderness			Canaan
All Mankind	BLOOD	Christ 	Nourished on Word	2nd COMING	Promised Land
Bondage in Sin		Church in Spiritual Wilderness			Heaven

In the same manner as Israel wandered in the wilderness and suffered the hardships of this physical world, the church is living in the spiritual wilderness of sin in the world today. In a spiritual comparison, Christians are constantly fighting battles against sin in the likeness of Israel fighting literal battles of warfare against their physical enemies. After the law of Moses was given on Mt.

Sinai, the children of Israel wandered for forty years as they awaited entrance into their promised land. Likewise, Christ gave his law on spiritual Mt. Zion, and those who obey that law (Christians) begin a period of spiritual wanderings in a world of sin, awaiting their promised land of heaven.

Another parallel that may be drawn from this is how God nourishes his people. In the wilderness, Israel was nourished on literal manna. Today, the church is nourished on spiritual manna, which is the Word of the Lord. (See Jn. 6:31-35).

CHAPTER 12

The subject of chapter 12 is a glorious woman who is clothed with the sun and has the moon under her feet. She is also wearing a crown of twelve stars. Reasons will be given in the text of this chapter that will identify this woman as the complete church of God of all ages. The church being described as a woman is in agreement with other passages throughout the New Testament. The church is referred to as the “bride” of Christ in 21:9. In Rom. 7:4, the church is described as being married to Christ. Christ is the bridegroom; the church is the bride.

The church, being described as a glorious woman, is also a contrast to the “great harlot” of chapter 17. The great harlot is symbolic of those who commit spiritual fornication or are unfaithful to God. The glorious woman represents the true church of God, or those who are faithful to him.

It is also important to understand the overall context of the visions throughout the chapter. The following is a brief overlook at the events contained in this chapter.

First Vision

- v. 1..... The woman appears.
- v. 2..... She was about to deliver a child.
- v. 3-4.... The great red dragon appears and attempts to devour the child.
- v. 5..... The child is caught up to the Throne of God.
- v. 6..... The woman flees into the wilderness and is nourished by God.

Second Vision

- v. 7..... There is war in heaven.
- v. 8-9 ... The devil and his angels are cast out of heaven.
- v. 10..... Salvation, strength, the kingdom, and the power of Christ comes.
- v. 11..... People overcome the devil by the blood of the Lamb.
- v. 12-13. The devil goes out to persecute the woman.
- v. 14..... The woman goes into the wilderness.
- v. 14..... The woman is nourished by God.
- v. 15..... The devil attempts to destroy the woman.
- v. 16..... The devil is unable to destroy the woman.
- v. 17..... The devil goes out to make war against the seed of he woman, or those who keep the commandments of God.

One other symbol that must be discussed in order to properly interpret chapter 12 is the number “3½.” Verse 6 says that God will feed the church for a period of 1,260 days. In verse 14, the church is described as being nourished “for a time, and times, and half a time.” To “nourish” the church and “feed” the church would be equivalent. Therefore, the period of 1,260 days is the same period of time as the “time, times, and half a time.” The “time” (1); “times” (2); and “half a time” (½); totals 3½. If we take the Jewish calendar year of 360 days and multiply that by 3½, the result is 1,260 days, or the same period of time as 3½ years.

Many people fail to understand this great chapter because they seek to interpret these numbers literally. The numbers

are figurative; they describe the nature of the time period being discussed. In this case the number “3½” means a time of despair, confusion, and longing. For the church to wander in the wilderness for a period of 1,260 days means that it is in a time of despair, suffering many persecutions, and longing for the coming of her bridegroom. This is the situation of the church today as it wanders in the wilderness of this world. This is a likeness to the forty years of Israel wandering in the wilderness under the leadership of Moses. This was a time of great despair for those people as they awaited entrance into their promised land of Canaan. The difference in the situation of the children of Israel and the church today is that Israel was a physical kingdom; however, the church is a spiritual kingdom. We are in a spiritual kingdom today wandering upon this earth in a time of despair and waiting for our spiritual promised land of heaven. From this we see that the 3½ years; 1,260 days; and a time, times, and half a time all represent this entire gospel age. It will last until Christ returns.

In order to complete our understanding of the number “3½,” we must discuss one other symbolic number that can be derived from this number – forty-two months (11:2; 13:5). Forty-two months is also equivalent to 1,260 days or 3½ years. Forty-two months multiplied by 30 days per month yields 1,260 days. Also, 3½ multiplied by 12 months per year yields 42 months. All of these numbers are used to describe the nature of the situation in which the church exists in this world today.

It is significant to note that the symbolic forty-two months is always used when referring to this gospel age as a time of physical persecution of the church. (See 13:5; 11:2.) The number “1,260” is used in connection with spiritual trials that the church must face (v. 6; 11:3). This is in keeping with the use of the number “4” to represent physical things and the number “12” to refer to religious matters.

With these things in mind, it becomes apparent that the subject of chapter 12 is the church of our Lord, which is represented by the glorious woman. Information is given

concerning the church as it exists in the world all during this Christian dispensation. Events are pictured that lead up to the first coming of the Messiah and the establishment of the church. We are told how the church is fed and protected by God as Satan goes about seeking to destroy it. Information is also given concerning how an ungodly world will help create a situation that will allow the true church to exist. It is our hope that a study of this marvelous chapter will greatly increase our understanding of the true church and how it dwells in the spiritual wilderness of this world during this Christian age.

THE WOMAN, THE CHILD, AND THE DRAGON

Verse 1. 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 twelve stars:

With the appearance of this great wonder or sign in heaven, a new vision begins. This great wonder was a glorious woman about to give birth to a man child (v. 5). As will be discussed later, this man child must be Jesus, so this woman must represent that which made it possible for him to come into this world. There are two possible explanations of the symbolism. One is that this woman represents the physical mother of Jesus; the other is that she represents the Jewish system of religion that God established in order to maintain a direct line of descendants from Abraham to Jesus Christ. We can immediately eliminate Mary, the physical mother of Jesus, as the correct meaning of this symbol because of the inability of this interpretation to agree with the symbolism of the woman in verses 6 and 13-17. Therefore, we must conclude that this woman represents the Jewish system of religion, the old law, which was used by God to prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah (Gal. 3:24). Gal. 3:14 says that the blessing of Abraham would come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ. Jesus is referred to as the seed of Abraham in Gal. 3:16. Gal. 3:19 states that the old law was given

because of transgressions until the seed (Jesus) should come. The old law was established to prepare the world for the coming of Christ. Therefore, the woman must represent those under the old law or the church of the Old Testament. Act 7:38 says, "This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and *with* our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:" The symbol of the glorious woman must also be used to represent the church of the New Testament because she is spoken of in verse 6 as fleeing into the wilderness after Jesus is caught up to heaven.

This interpretation is strengthened by the fact that this woman has a crown of twelve stars upon her head. The number "12" is used to represent organized religion. The old law was given to the twelve tribes of Israel, and the new law was given by the twelve apostles. The crown of twelve stars represents the authority of the glorious woman, which was given to her by God.

This woman was clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet. The sun and moon are often used to represent the ability to give spiritual light unto the world. This is exactly the case here. The glorious woman, which represents the church, is the light of the world today as it has been throughout the ages.

Verse 2. And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

As discussed in verse 1, the old law was given to prepare the world for Christ. This verse brings us to the time of the first coming of Christ. Just as a woman has great pain immediately prior to the birth of a baby, the world was in great need of a Messiah. The way had been prepared for Christ, and the world needed a Savior. The Jewish system of religion was about to produce the Messiah who would be the Savior of the world.

Verse 3. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

Another wonder appeared in heaven – a great red dragon. According to verse 9, this great red dragon was the devil. The dragon had seven heads and ten horns; the meaning of which will be discussed at length in chapters 13 and 17. Briefly, the seven heads represent governmental powers that have controlled the world throughout the ages, and the ten horns represent kings and kingdoms that later arise in this world with great authority. (See 17:9-12.) One relationship that should be discussed here is that this same description is used to describe the beast out of the sea in 13:1, and the beast that carried the scarlet woman in chapter 17. This should make it clear that these beasts, which are described later in the book, are manifestations of the devil. They are powers that have been in force here on earth all throughout the history of the world and are doing the work of the devil. The devil has always used man to carry out his evil deeds and will continue to do so until the end of time.

The red dragon also has crowns upon his heads, which represent the power and authority he uses to cause many people to follow him instead of Christ.

Verse 4. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

The great red dragon, the devil, is pictured as destroying the third part of the stars of heaven. To determine the meaning of the stars, let us refer back to 1:16 where Christ is pictured holding seven stars in his right hand. These stars must represent those people who are faithful to him – Christians. This interpretation is reinforced by the use of “heaven” in the remainder of chapter 12 as being symbolic of the dwelling place of the righteous. This is in contrast to the “earth,” which symbolizes the dwelling place of those who are in sin. The “stars of heaven” represent God’s people who live during any age.

The third part of these stars are cast down to the earth. Again, this “third part” is not a literal number, but instead,

as explained in chapter 8, it represents the spiritual part of man. Therefore, this symbolism shows the ability of the devil to destroy the spiritual part of God's people. Notice the devil possessed this ability to destroy the "third part" of man before Christ was born. Under the Law of Moses, man lived in a state of sin because he could not obtain forgiveness under that law unless he lived it perfectly. Therefore, as long as the Law of Moses was in force, the devil could destroy the spiritual part of God's people. This is why he stood before this glorious woman seeking to devour Christ as soon as he was born. He knew that Christ could provide forgiveness of sins and this would destroy his powers. (See Heb. 2:14-15.)

The power the devil exhibits in destroying the "third part" of the stars would lead us to believe that he would have the strength to destroy a baby as soon as it was born, but this is not the case. The child was the Son of God with power to overcome the devil. This is exactly the concept explained in verses 7 through 12, which describe the war in heaven. Christ overcame the devil and was caught up to heaven (v. 5). This made it possible for us to overcome the devil in our lives today.

Verse 5. 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.

The only logical interpretation of verse 5 is that this man child is Jesus Christ. In 19:15 a description is given of someone riding a white horse who rules the nations with a rod of iron. According to 19:16, this rider is definitely Jesus Christ because he is called King of kings and Lord of lords. Therefore, Jesus must be the man child born of this woman, who was to rule the nations with a rod of iron.

If Jesus is the one being described here, then what does it mean to rule the nations with a rod of iron? Again, in 19:11-16 Christ is described as riding a white horse and leading armies clothed in white. These armies clothed in white must be Christians who go forth into the world proclaiming the gospel to all nations. Therefore, the rod of

iron that Christ uses to rule the nations must be the law which he gave man to follow – the gospel.

Another major event described in verse 5 is the ascension of Jesus to heaven where he assumes his place on God's Throne. The entire life of Jesus is covered in this one verse. Probably, the reason for this is to emphatically define the exact identity of the man child. There can be little doubt that the man child is Jesus Christ our Lord.

Verse 6. 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.

The "wilderness" is a familiar symbol taken from accounts in the Old Testament concerning the forty years of wilderness wanderings by the children of Israel. The spiritual kingdom of God, the church, is in a period of time today likened unto that period of wilderness wanderings. After the Law of Moses was given on Mt. Sinai, the children of Israel entered into a forty-year period of wanderings in the wilderness before entering their promised land. The same is true with the church today. The law of Christ was given in Jerusalem, Mt. Zion (Mic. 4:2), and the church is now wandering in this world, awaiting our promised land which is heaven.

Verse 6 is a description of the church entering into a period of time comparable to the wanderings of the children of Israel in the Old Testament. During this time the church will dwell in a world of sin. It will be attacked from every side by the forces of evil. The major difference in these times is that we are now in a spiritual kingdom, rather than a physical kingdom. The physical kingdom of the Old Testament was a likeness of the spiritual kingdom, which was established by Christ (Heb. 10:1). The church wanders today in despair and dissatisfaction, yet longing and hoping for the second coming of Christ when he will take us out of this present world to our promised land of heaven.

This helps us understand why this period of time,

covering the entire gospel age, is described as 1,260 days. This number “1,260” is another form of the number “3½,” or a time, times, and half a time (v. 14). It is used to describe a time of despair, dissatisfaction, or longing. Therefore, the number “1,260” shows what this period of time holds in store for those who seek to follow Christ. The “1,260 days” is a figurative description of the entire gospel age and not to be understood as a literal 1,260 days. (For more information, refer to the introduction of this chapter.)

We should also note in this verse that, even though the woman fled into the wilderness, she had a place that was prepared by God where he feeds her. This, like many other passages in Revelation, describes God’s protection and care for his people. Christians feed upon, and are nourished by, God’s Word, the Bible. In Acts 20:28, Paul admonishes the elders of the church at Ephesus to “feed the church of God.” As Christians wandering in this wilderness of a world of sin, we must constantly feed upon the Word of God. It will nourish our spiritual lives and give us strength to remain faithful through the many trials we must face.

THE DEVIL CAST FROM HEAVEN

Verse 7. And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

A great deal of discussion and many different interpretations have been presented concerning the meaning of the next few verses, which describe a war in heaven. One problem faced in interpreting this passage is determining the correct placement in time of the events of this war. Some people place it before the beginning of time; thereby, using this passage to determine the origin of Satan. Others believe that its fulfillment is yet to come. Still others believe it took place at the time of Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. We believe this latter interpretation is closest to being correct. We must keep clearly in mind that we are dealing with figurative symbols and visions that were shown to the apostle John, not literal events. Therefore, we

must look for the symbolic meaning of the “war in heaven.”

To properly interpret verse 7 would be almost impossible without first having a general understanding of verses 9 through 11. It might be helpful to study those verses before coming to any definite conclusions about this verse. We will point out a few facts that must be understood at this time and give a more complete discussion of each symbol in the verses to follow. Verse 9 states that the devil and his angels were cast out into the earth, and verse 10 lists some things that happened because of that casting out. We know this to be true because of the phrase “now is come.” The things that came about because the devil was cast out of heaven were: (1) salvation, (2) strength, (3) the kingdom of God, and (4) the power of Christ. When did all of these things take place? The undeniable answer to that question is: at the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, it becomes clear that the devil was cast out of heaven and down to the earth when Jesus was resurrected from the dead.

With these facts in mind, the next question to answer is: What does it mean to be cast out of heaven into the earth? In Eph. 2:5-6, Paul writes that God has “quickened us together with Christ” and has “made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” In this text the “heavenly places” is the dwelling place of those who are resurrected from the grave of sin. When we become Christians, we are resurrected from a life of sin to a state of sinlessness in Christ. Those who are in this state of sinlessness, or have their sins forgiven, are those who are in the Lord’s church. Therefore, the “heavenly places” is symbolic of the dwelling place of those who have their sins forgiven – the church.

The war being described here is the war whereby the devil was cast out of the dwelling place of God’s people. This simply defines the power of the devil before Jesus was resurrected to his power afterwards. Before Jesus became the sacrifice for our sins by his death, there was no forgiveness of sins. In that respect, Satan was in control. However, after Christ was resurrected from the dead, Satan

lost his power because man's sins could be forgiven.

The only way man could be reconciled unto God was by a perfect sacrifice, and until this happened man was in a lost state because he had no forgiveness of sins. His sins were remembered again each year because the blood of animal sacrifices could not take away sins (Heb. 10:3-4). When Jesus died on the cross, he became a sacrifice for the sins of those under the old law, as well as for those under the new law (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:15). This is how Satan was cast out of heaven. After Jesus died, man could get complete forgiveness of his sins, and the devil would have absolutely no control over him. He was cast down! Heb. 2:14 says that Christ through his death might “destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” This power of death was spiritual death because Jesus gave us spiritual life through his death. The meaning of this passage is close to that of 20:2, which describes Satan as being bound for one thousand years. The difference being; in this verse Satan is cast down, but 20:2 shows that he is bound by the gospel. So, he can never be in control again as long as man remains faithful to God.

This brings us to the point of defining exactly what this “war in heaven” was and when it took place. We should not think of this war as an isolated event. It is obvious that the dragon, or devil, was defeated in this war when Jesus died for our sins; however, this war had been in progress since the time Adam and Eve disobeyed God and sinned. Since that time, the devil had contended with God for the souls of man and was in control as long as there was no forgiveness of sins. When Christ died, he won that war; cast the devil out of heaven, and allowed him to have spiritual control over only those who are disobedient to God’s law. Satan was cast out of heaven, which is the spiritual dwelling place of God, the church, and down to the earth, which represents the dwelling place of those who disobey God.

Verse 8. And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

The devil and his angels were defeated. They were cast

out of heaven. This simply means that the devil no longer has any control over God's people. The complete forgiveness of sins has been obtained. This is not to say that the devil does not tempt Christians, because he obviously does. This means that as long as a person continues to be faithful and walk in the ways of our Lord, the devil cannot touch him. The place where God's people dwell; where our sins are forgiven, and where the devil is not allowed is that spiritual dwelling place of God here on earth – the church of our Lord.

Verse 9. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

This makes certain the identification of the great red dragon of verse 3 as the devil. Until Christ made the sacrifice for our sins, the devil had the ability to deceive the whole world because forgiveness of sins was not available at that time. When Jesus made the forgiveness of sins possible, the devil and his angels were cast out of heaven and into the earth. The earth is used to symbolize the dwelling place of the devil and his followers. This is in contrast to heaven, which symbolizes the church, or the dwelling place of Jesus and his followers.

Verse 10. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

When the devil and his angels were cast out of heaven, salvation came to man. This pinpoints the time the devil was cast out of heaven as being when Christ died on the cross. This is also the time when the kingdom of God was given to man. Although the church was not established until the day of Pentecost, the old law was fulfilled when Christ died. It came to an end (Col. 2:14). The testament, or will, of our Lord went into effect when he died. A person's

will goes into effect after he is dead, but the terms of that will are not known until it is read. This is exactly how Jesus gave us the new law. When he died on the cross, his will went into effect, but the terms of that will were not read until the day of Pentecost (Heb. 9:15-17).

The power of Christ also came when the devil was cast down to the earth. Rom. 1:4 says that Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God with power,... by the resurrection from the dead.” Therefore, this also points to the fact that the devil was cast out of heaven and down to the earth when Jesus died and was resurrected from the dead.

The devil is spoken of as accusing “our brethren,” or God’s people, before God day and night. Satan had been able to do this all through Old Testament times. He accused them because their sins were unforgiven. When Christ died to forgive those sins, Satan could no longer accuse them. He lost that war and is no longer able to accuse God’s people of sin because they stand sinless in his sight.

The phrase “day and night” simply indicates a continual process. He was able to constantly accuse God’s people of sin until they received forgiveness.

Verse 11. 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.

In verse 10, those who were being accused before God day and night were referred to as “our brethren.” This must refer to the people of God of all ages because all those who follow God, regardless of whether they lived under the old law or the new law, overcame the devil by the blood of the Lamb. The blood of Christ was man’s atonement for sin unto God. This again is further proof that the “casting down” of the devil took place when Jesus died on the cross. The devil accused “our brethren day and night” until they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, the casting down is symbolic of man receiving the forgiveness of his sins. The devil can no longer accuse God’s people of being sinners because they have obeyed his commandments and received the forgiveness of their sins.

The word of their testimony must refer to the gospel that was given by our Lord after his death. Many Christians have “loved not their lives unto the death” because they have been required to give their physical lives in order to remain faithful to Christ, thereby preserving their spiritual lives.

Verse 12. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

Heaven is symbolic of the spiritual dwelling place of Christians – the church. The earth and sea represent the dwelling place of those who are living in sin (Eph. 1:3,20; 2:6). Christians are told to rejoice because they are dwelling in the spiritual heavenly place where the devil has no control over them. Those who are dwelling in the earth, or the place of spiritual wickedness, are warned that the devil is among them having great wrath. The only people the devil can control are those who are sinful in the sight of God. We must emphasize that this does not mean the devil cannot tempt God’s people, because he can. It means that he has no power over them as long as they remain faithful.

The devil is angry because he knows that he has only a “short time,” and verses 13 through 17 describe the actions of the devil during this period of time. This “short time” must represent the remainder of time here on earth, or the gospel age. He will spend this time persecuting the church (v. 13), or those who keep the commandments of God (v. 17). With man’s understanding of time, it is hard to realize how this could be a “short time,” but in terms of eternity, the gospel age will be short. When Christ died on the cross, the devil must have realized that his doom was sealed. He will tempt all men and persecute the church until the end of time. Then, according to 20:10, he will be cast into the lake of fire where he will be tormented forever. To the devil, this indeed must be a “short time.”

THE DRAGON PERSECUTES THE WOMAN

Verse 13. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

We must once again identify this woman as the system of religion, or worship, that God has designed for mankind throughout the ages. In our Christian age, this woman would be the spiritual kingdom of God, his church. When the devil was cast out of heaven into the earth, he immediately began to persecute the church. This woman had brought forth the man child (Jesus) who was responsible for casting Satan from heaven to earth. This destroyed the devil's power over man by making the forgiveness of sin available.

Verse 14. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent

This verse is similar to verse 6. Just as in verse 6, this verse pictures the church as fleeing into the wilderness, which is a place prepared by God where he will feed and protect his people. (See v. 6 for a discussion of the wilderness symbol.)

The woman was given two wings of an eagle to fly into the wilderness. Since this is a place of nourishment, it indicates that God protects his people and has made a way for them to escape the temptations of the devil. In Ex. 19:4, God uses this same type of symbolism to describe how he delivered the children of Israel from the hands of the Egyptians. This woman flying into the wilderness is a picture of the church today. God provides Christians a place of protection from the devil when he forgives our sins, and he nourishes us through his Word.

The symbol "time, and times, and half a time" is used in this verse instead of "a thousand two hundred and threescore days" (v. 6). It should now become clear that both of these symbols, which are types of the number "3

½,” are used to represent the same period of time – the entire gospel age. God will nourish and feed his people all through the Christian dispensation. Therefore, this “time, and times, and half a time” must be symbolic of this entire Christian dispensation. It describes the nature of this wilderness wandering as a time of despair as we long for the spiritual promised land of heaven. (See the introduction of this chapter for a discussion of the number “3½.”)

Verse 15. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

The serpent, as mentioned in verse 13, goes out to persecute and, if possible, destroy the woman, which is the church. This is exactly what the devil is doing today. He is constantly at work tempting and persecuting God’s people and trying to do anything possible to cause the faithful to turn from God. The symbolism used to describe this is a flood of water proceeding out of the serpent’s mouth to carry the woman away. In 22:1 and 17, the Word of God (the gospel) is referred to as the water of life proceeding out of the Throne of God. Therefore, water out of the mouth of Satan would symbolize all manners of false teachings, lying, and deceit that he and his followers use to attack and, if it were possible, destroy the church.

Verse 16. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

This is an interesting verse because it states that in some way the earth, which symbolizes the dwelling place of those people other than Christians, actually assists the church in her battle against the devil. It is hard to say exactly how this happens. Most likely it means that there are people who are not members of the Lord’s church who actually oppose many of the ways of the devil. If we look at the world today, we can observe this very situation. There are many who are not members of the Lord’s church because they have not obeyed the gospel, yet they believe

in Jesus, teach others about him and vigorously oppose the ways of Satan. They have been deceived into believing that partial obedience is acceptable.

These people actually make it easier for the true church to exist. If the world were completely void of any spirituality, other than those who are members of the church, it would be difficult for the church to exist at all because of the unrestrained evil that would prevail. Rev. 20:7-9 seems to suggest that a situation such as this might occur prior to, but very near, the second coming of Christ. Therefore, those people who are spiritually minded yet not members of the Lord's church, actually serve a purpose here on earth by creating a situation that will enable the true church to exist. In this manner they assist the woman by swallowing up the flood cast out by the devil.

One side note here should prove beneficial as you pursue your private studies of Revelation. The "earth" seems to be used symbolically in several places to indicate those people who are spiritual in nature but not members of the church. This is in contrast to the "sea," which is symbolic of the masses of people who dwell in this world who do not believe in Jesus. In other places, the "sea" seems to include both of these groups. This type of symbolism becomes apparent in chapter 12 where "heaven" is used to represent the dwelling place of Christians – the church, and the "earth" is the dwelling place of sinners.

Verse 17. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ

Because the devil no longer has any control over those who are in the church, he goes forth to persecute and tempt them in any way possible. The "remnant of her seed" is defined as those who keep the commandments of God. They are Christians. They are referred to as the remainder of her seed because Jesus was the first seed the woman brought forth. (See vv. 2, 5.) Gal. 3:16 describes Christ as the seed (singular) of Abraham, and Gal. 3:29 describes

those who are “in Christ” (Christians) as being the seed of Abraham. Therefore, the promise God made to Abraham that all nations would be blessed through him was fulfilled by his seed. That “seed” was Christ. As Christians we are the remnant of that seed because we keep the commandments of God.

They also have the testimony of Jesus, which means it is our duty as believers to teach and preach the Word. This is how Jesus is known in the world today. (See 1 Jn. 5:10.)