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Introduction: Chapter 11 presented the finality of Christ's great conquering of the enemies of God and of this world. The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and it was announced that "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever" (11:15). What begins in Chapter 12 is an accounting of what transpires both in heaven and on earth as the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, returns to establish His kingdom; this will lead all the way to Chapter 19, when the glorious and long-anticipated return of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords is shown in some detail.

In this Chapter we read of two great signs John saw in heaven. These signs represent the major players in the great, spiritual war of the ages, a war that has been going since Lucifer first rose up in rebellion in heaven. Ultimately what Revelation is all about is God's great and final victory in that war. The return of Jesus to this world, the defeat of Satan and his being cast into the lake of fire forever, the redemption of Israel and the establishment of the kingdom of the Messiah ruling from the throne of David is the great triumph of God over all of His enemies in an ages-old epic of almost unimaginable scope. In a sense, you can say this Chapter is a bit of a step back from the detailed account of what is coming (as it is being revealed to John) to show how it all fits into a bigger picture.

The first portion of this Chapter (vv.1-5, the subject of this study) is an introduction to the key players in God's redemptive plan and the enemy's fight against it: Israel, Christ, and Satan.

1. Verses 1-2 - The first sign, the pregnant woman in travail: Israel.

- v.1 - **a great sign... a woman...** i.e., this was a symbol of something; in Roman Catholicism, and perhaps in other circles, this is taken literally to be Mary the mother of Jesus (Mary in Roman Catholic art is sometimes depicted this way). But by calling it a **sign** the text specifically calls this a *representation* or a *symbol*. The woman is certainly a symbol of *Israel*. The description, which includes the **sun**, the **moon**, and **twelve stars**, matches a description of Israel given to Joseph in a dream in Genesis 37:9 (there are only 11 stars there, but Joseph himself is the 12th, not represented in that dream).

NOTE: Mary was indeed the vessel by which God fulfilled His plan through Israel. But the woman is a sign of Israel, for she is shown to be in great suffering and danger, as Israel perpetually seemed to be.

- v.2 - **with child...** Israel was the nation by which God brought His own Son into the world, bringing salvation to man. Genesis 3:15 spoke of a "Seed of the woman" crushing the serpent's (Satan's) head. Isaiah 7:14 prophesied to Israel of a virgin giving birth. **cried out in labor and in pain...** Israel, though the centuries, always seemed to be in labor and pain as she lived as God's representatives on earth. She has suffered greatly, recorded in the Bible and throughout history, and is even seen in modern times still quite surrounded by enemies and in danger. **give birth...** that is, bring forth Jesus, fulfilling God's plan of redemption for the world.

2. Verses 3-4 - The second sign, the dragon: Satan.

- v.3 - **another sign...** See note for v.1. **great, fiery red dragon...** its greatness speaks of its power, and its color (of blood and fire) speaks of its destructiveness. Verse 9 makes it clear that this is Satan. **seven heads** - *seven* represents completion, *head* represents authority (the heads had **seven diadems** also) - shows Satan as in complete control of this world. He is the ruler of this age, the prince of the power of the air. Interestingly, there are seven great empires of this world that pertained to Israel:

Egypt, Assyria (which carried the Northern tribes away), Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the empire of the coming Anti-Christ, which seems to be, from Daniel's vision, a revived form of the Roman Empire (based in a unified Europe perhaps, or perhaps greater in scope involving more world powers. See Daniel 2:36-45. **ten horns...** The final world power, that which is ruled by Antichrist, is presented in Daniel 7 as having ten horns, each horn representing a king. See Daniel 7:23-24.

- v.4 - **a third of the stars of heaven...** demons, serving Satan, fallen with him. **devour her Child...** Satan has always tried to destroy Israel (the woman), her child (Jesus the Messiah), and essentially anything having to do with either one, including those who are followers of Jesus.

3. Verse 5 - The Child of the pregnant woman: The Lord Jesus Christ.

- v.5 - **She bore a male Child...** the birth of Jesus, a descendant of Israel. **rule all nations with a rod of iron...** When Jesus comes the second time, it will be to fulfil this quite literally; the Book of Revelation is all about the coming of His kingdom. **caught up to God and His throne...** After Jesus died and rose from the dead, He ascended to heaven, where He is now. Satan failed in his attempt to thwart God's redemptive plan by destroying Israel or her Child!