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the moon and is crowned with twelve stars, symbolic of divinely appointed leadership. The Lord said, "I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman" (Jeremiah 6:2); and Paul said to the church of Corinth: "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2).

In regard to a woman being used in the Scriptures as a symbol of the church of God, Albertus Pieters said: "This meaning is more generally agreed upon than the meaning of almost any other of the chief figures of the book of Revelation." [29]

"Christ honored the marriage relation by making it also a symbol of the union between Him and His redeemed ones. He Himself is the Bridegroom; the bride is the church." [30]

"In Revelation 17, Babylon is represented as a woman, a figure which is used in the Bible as the symbol of a church, a virtuous woman representing a pure church, a vile woman an apostate church." [31]

The church of Christ is symbolized by one woman, whereas Babylon, the church of Satan, is represented by a family composed of a corrupt mother and many daughters of the same character. The church is spoken of as "the body of Christ," and He can have but one body of which He is the head. (See Ephesians 2:22; 4:4.) Ancient Israel is called "the church in the wilderness." (Acts 7:38) There has been but one true church through all the ages, of which all God's people have been members. Those of the last generation are therefore called "the remnant of her seed" or children rather than "the remnant church." (See Revelation 12:17)

"All of God's people upon the earth are one body, from the beginning to the end of time. They have one Head that directs and governs the body." [32]

"The church of God below is one with the church of God above. Believers on the earth and the beings in heaven who have never fallen constitute one church." [33]

In Hebrews 12:22, 23, we are told that "the church of the firstborn" embraces all "which are written in heaven," including "an innumerable company of angels."

It is evident that the symbolic woman under consideration cannot possibly represent the church of the Christian dispensation only, because the "man child" to whom she gave birth came into the world thirty years before the Christian church had its origin. The man child was of course Christ, who was later "caught up unto God, and to his throne," and will someday "rule all nations with a rod of iron." That this woman represents the one church of all time is the opinion of many of the best commentators:

"We regard the Woman as the symbol of God's religious system on earth, from the beginning of His testimony until the consummation." [34]

"It must then be the CHURCH; the church not simply as Jewish, but in a more generic and theocratic sense—the People of God." [35]

"The Woman is the Old and New Testament Church of God in undivided unity." [36]

"She is the heavenly representative of the people of God.... represented alike by the people of the old and new covenants.... With our writer there is only one true Israel, embracing alike the Jewish and Christian Church." [37]

"Doubtless the Church of the Old Testament was the Mother of whom Christ came after the flesh. But here, as everywhere in the Book, no sharp dividing line is drawn between the Church of the Old Testament and the Christian Society, the latter is viewed as the Jewish Church come to its maturity. Thus the woman who gave birth to the Christ is afterwards identical with her who after His departure suffered for her faith in Him . . . and who is the mother of believers." [38]

"There has really been but one Church on earth, existing through all times and under all economies. And so we have here, as the symbol of it, this one glorious woman, in whom all its highest excellencies and chief characteristics are summed up from the beginning even unto the great consummation." [39]

The woman, or church, is pictured as waiting for the birth of the Redeemer. How long did God's people wait for the promised Messiah?—from the gates of Paradise, when the first gospel promise was made, revealing the fact that redemption would come through the seed of the woman. Every godly mother hoped that her son would be the expected Deliverer. There was no definite knowledge of the time until Daniel received the prophecy of the seventy weeks of years, sixty nine of which would reach to "Messiah the Prince." In this prophecy the very year of Christ's baptism and anointing was pointed out almost six hundred years before the events occurred. So, naturally, when the time came "the people were in expectation."

The revelator then saw another symbol, that of a "great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns." In verse 9 this dragon is declared to represent—that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which

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deceives the whole world.” That it also represents Satan’s earthly ruler ship through seven great universal powers of earth and the lesser kingdoms symbolized by the ten horns is evident. Both seven and ten are symbols of completeness and universality. Therefore, the dragon with seven heads and ten horns represents the entire history of the revolt of Satan against the government of God from the fall of a third of the angelic host and the first phase of the warfare against Michael in heaven to his final attack on the remnant of the church of Christ at the close of the career of the church militant.

That the dragon is symbolic of the completeness of Satan’s dominion as “the prince of this world- is the position of most modern commentators, including our own:

“The seven heads may fitly represent the multiplied worldly powers which the evil one brings against Christ and His Church.... The whole scene is expressive of the great powers which from the beginning wage war with the Lamb!” [40]

“Here Satan is depicted as a great red monster, having seven heads and ten horns and upon his heads crowns. This and other similar presentations are surely given just to indicate the universality of Satanic power in the world. . . . The heads and horns and crowns simply express various phases of his earthly power.” [41]

“The ‘seven heads and ten horns’ of this Dragon, represent the consummation of his efforts, through his control of the governments of this world, to persecute the true worshipers of God, and to secure for himself that worship which belongs to God alone . . . ; ‘seven’ being the number in this book to denote dispensational fullness or completeness.” [42]

That the mighty dragon, the symbol of physical strength and power, should be defeated and finally destroyed by a Lamb, the symbol of timidity and weakness, is the paradox of paradoxes, indicating that the long contest has its climax in Christ’s atoning sacrifice on the altar of Calvary. Satan’s knowledge of the time of the Messiah’s advent was gained through his study of the revelations of the prophets and of the types of the typical services:

“When God’s written word was given through the Hebrew prophets, Satan studied with diligence the messages concerning the Messiah. Carefully he traced the words that outlined with unmistakable clearness Christ’s work among men as a suffering sacrifice and a conquering king.” [43]

His first definite knowledge as to the time was the prophecy of Daniel, and as the appointed time drew near Satan stood before the woman, or church, with even more expectancy than was manifested by God’s own professed people. It was his long-expected opportunity, and he planned to make the most of it.

It seemed evident that at first Satan entertained some doubts regarding the identity of Jesus as the Messiah, just as did the people of God. He may have shared some of the mistaken ideas of the Jews. It did not seem possible that the meek and lowly Jesus could be the former mighty Prince Michael whom he had known in heaven and who had defeated him and his angels in the contest there. He was, however, assured that Jesus was the Messiah when at His baptism the voice of the Father was heard saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The identity was complete when during the battle in the wilderness Christ asserted His divine authority and commanded Satan to get behind Him.

“Satan had questioned whether Jesus was the Son of God. In his summary dismissal he had proof that he could not gainsay. Divinity flashed through suffering humanity. Satan had no power to resist the command. Writhing with humiliation and rage, he was forced to withdraw from the presence of the world’s Redeemer. Christ’s victory was as complete as had been the failure of Adam.” []

The prophecy declares that “the dragon stood,” or “was standing” before the woman in a waiting and expectant attitude, ready to destroy “the man child” as soon as He was born. How long did he wait in anxious expectation for Michael to become a partaker of human flesh? Since he had been diligently searching the writings of the prophets down through the ages to ascertain if possible the time of His advent, it is evident that Satan waited just as long as did the church, or from the time of the first gospel promise. It was then that he learned that Michael would come into the world through birth. He may have wondered whether the miracle child Isaac was the promised one, and later whether Moses was the expected one. But because of his knowledge of the prophecy of Daniel, he too was in “expectation” when John the Baptist began to announce that the advent of the Messiah was at hand. The dragon, under the then-ruling head of pagan Rome, attempted through Herod to destroy Jesus soon after His birth, but was thwarted in his purpose.

Both the sun-clad woman and the great red dragon are symbolic of world-embracing, universal, and parallel organizations or movements. They represent two rival and antagonistic systems covering the entire history of the reign of sin. The church of Christ and the powers of darkness have always been two great conflicting forces on the earth, the latter ever manifesting the spirit of malignity and seeking to crush

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every tendency toward salvation through the blood of Christ.

Revelation 12:7-13 constitutes an interruption in the narrative of the warfare of the dragon against Christ and His church, and the purpose of this parenthetical statement is to give the background of the long controversy and the reason for Satan's malignity against Christ, especially while He was on earth completing the plan of redemption. It is evident that these verses have a double application, first, to the beginning of the conflict that took place in heaven and resulted in Satan's defeat and the loss of his official position as the first of the covering cherubs. And, second, to the great struggle between Christ and Satan on earth during the period of Christ's incarnation as "the man child." Verses 10-13 describe Christ's Calvary victory and its results both in heaven and on earth. This was the decisive battle in the war between Prince Michael and Prince Lucifer. It will be discussed in our next study.

The Atonement in Reality

The cross is the great center of all time, the meeting place of the two eternities. The word history is said to be an abbreviated form of his story, and the story of all stories is that of Christ and Him crucified. Therefore history can be properly understood and appreciated only when its events are viewed in their relationship to Calvary. This is especially true of sacred history.

"The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption, the Son of God uplifted on the cross. This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers." [45]

"The mystery of the cross explains all other mysteries." [46]

This is also the viewpoint of the angelic host and the inhabitants of sinless worlds. The death of Christ was the great event that completed the process of reconciling the sinless universe to God. Christ declared that when He would be lifted up on the cross He would draw all unto Him. Concerning the pre-eminence of Christ in both creation and redemption the apostle Paul wrote:

"Christ is the visible representation of the invisible God, the Firstborn and Lord of all creation. For in Him was created the universe of things in heaven and on earth, things seen and things unseen, thrones, dominions, principedoms, powers—all were created, and exist, through and for Him. And HE IS before all things and in and through Him the universe is a harmonious whole. Moreover He is the I-lead of His Body, the Church. He is the Beginning, the Firstborn from among the dead, in order that He Himself may in all things occupy the foremost place. For it was the Father's gracious will that the whole of the divine perfection should dwell in Him. And God purposed through Him to reconcile the universe to Himself, making peace through His blood, which was shed upon the Cross—to reconcile to Himself through Him, I say, things on earth and things in heaven." Colossians 1:15-20, Weymouth.

The apostle makes it clear that Christ was the Redeemer because He was the Creator, and because He made all creatures He was able through His blood to reconcile them to the members of the Godhead, from whom they had been partially alienated because of unanswered questions in their minds in regard to the meaning of sin and the merits of Satan's charges against the divine administration. The events of four millenniums of the reign of sin under the sovereignty of the usurper "prince of this world" had gradually opened their eyes to the meaning of "the mystery hidden from ages and generations" but which was "now made manifest to the saints" through the incarnation and atoning death of Christ.

In the panoramic view of world history embracing the controversy between Christ and Satan as set forth in the twelfth chapter of the Revelation, the results of Calvary on the universe is thus described:

"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. 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. Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you 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 knows that he hath but a short time." Verses 10-12.

Because of its eternal consequences to all creation, the sinless universe staged a great celebration over Christ's Calvary triumph. The event sealed the new covenant and made sure the plan of redemption. It deposed Satan from his last official position in the government of heaven, that of "the prince of this world,"