

Revelation Chapter 12

Revelation 12:1 *And there appeared a great wonder [or sign] in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: 2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. 3 And there appeared another wonder [or sign] in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. 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. 5 And she brought forth a man child [lit. a male], who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. 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. 7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, 8 And [he] prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth [the one leading astray] the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. 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. 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. 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. 13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. 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. 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. 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 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~~.*

Archimandrite Athanasios: The 12th chapter of Revelations is extremely important because it is central to the entire book and serves as a key to its understanding. [The content of this chapter describes a three part vision in which there is a symbolic presentation of the preliminary battle between Satan and the Messiah. This not only incorporates the First Coming of the Lord, but the Second as well. The first image of the vision presents a magnificent and heavenly woman. The second image presents the battle between the dragon/devil, [and] the Archangel Michael, and the fall of the dragon from heaven. Finally the third image of the vision presents the fury of the dragon/devil that persecutes the woman of the first image such that she seeks refuge in the desert.

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Revelation 12:1 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:

Archbishop Averky: Certain [ancient] commentators have seen in this mystical woman the Most Holy Theotokos, but such outstanding commentators as St. Hippolytus, St. Methodius, and St. Andrew of Caesarea find that this is “the Church clothed in the Word of the Father, shining more brightly than the sun. This brilliance of the sun likewise signifies that she possesses the true knowledge of God and His laws and contains His revelations. The moon under her feet is a sign of the fact that she is above everything that changes.

On her head is a crown of 12 stars that, being originally gathered together from the 12 tribes of Israel, she subsequently was guided by the twelve apostles who comprise her light-bearing glory.

[However, Archimandrite Athanasios writes]: The focus of this great sign is a woman, who is the Most Holy Theotokos, the mother of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The sign is an image of the First Coming of Christ, but simultaneously, within the same image there is another aspect, one with an eschatological dimension, which is that of the Church. Therefore this image has two aspects, one is that the image is the Most Holy Theotokos, and the other is that the image is of the Church.

In this most spectacular image, the Most Holy Theotokos is clothed with the sun; it is well known that she is clothed with the uncreated light. As there is no other way for us to express this, so we will simply call it sunlight.

Revelation 12:2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

Archimandrite Athanasios: Full of virtues, the Most Holy Theotokos appears as pregnant in this vision; she is travailing in pain to give birth. Of course, God the Word became man; and since He became man, He was therefore carried in the womb and was born. The expression *travailing in birth*, or having birth pains, does not relate to the image of the Most Holy Theotokos as a person. Her birthing of Christ was not only painless but according to the Apolytikion of her Dormition, *she preserved her virginity as well*. [So this aspect] relates to the second aspect of this image, which is that of the Church ...

Averky: ... [Consequently,] These torments of birth-giving signify the difficulties which had to be overcome by the Church of Christ when it was being established in the world [i.e., persecution,] (martyrdom, the spreading of heresies). At the same time it signifies, in the explanation of St. Andrew, that “the Church is pained for each one of those who is reborn by water and the Spirit, until, as the divine Apostle has said, *Christ shall be formed in them* (Gal 4:19). St. Methodius says, ”The Church is pained giving rebirth from natural to spiritual men and transforming them in appearance and image into the likeness of Christ.”

Revelation 12:3 And there appeared another wonder [or sign] in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

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Archbishop Averky: [Note here that] the word *heaven* does not refer to the throne of God, but to the firmament, to the sky. St. John sees all of this in the sky. He sees the dragon in this panoramic scene, wherein a great battle will be carried out -- a battle beyond all battles undertaken in history ... the battle that will take place between the Child that will be born from this woman and the dragon.



Archimandrite Athanasios: The word *sign* [or wonder, here,] has many meanings. Here ... sign refers to a very special event, a milestone, and a mark, something that consists of an identifying characteristic of one thing or an event ... This sign is the devil, because he is the dragon, as we shall see [below in verse 9, where St. John identifies him: *And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, the one leading astray the whole world*] ... so who is he? He is the mystery of lawlessness, as Saint Paul tells us, *the mystery of lawlessness is already at work* (2 Thess 2:7). The devil is the sign of lawlessness [i.e., everything that opposes God and His will.] Lawlessness **is** following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience (Ephesians 2:9)] ... [And this is the spirit that is currently energizing our world from one end of the globe to another which we see and read about every day, which is taught in our schools, proclaimed on our college campuses, shouted out in our streets -- a rebellion against God, against Christ, and against the Church, a freedom from God, which only brings about slavery to unbridled passions and enslavement to the father of lies, who was and is a liar and a murderer from the beginning, Satan.]

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Archbishop Averky: In this image of the dragon one cannot but see the ancient serpent called the devil or Satan ... The red color signifies his blood-thirsty cruelty; the 7 heads signify his extreme slyness and cunning, as opposed to the seven spirits of God, the gifts of the Holy Spirit; the ten horns are his evil power and might, which are directed against the Ten Commandments of the Law of God. The crowns on his head signify the royal authority of the devil in his dark kingdom. As applied to the history of the Church, some see in these seven crowns seven kings who rise up against the Church; and in the ten horns, ten persecutions against the Church.

Archimandrite Athanasios: “7” is a symbolic number that shows a great quantity. In this case, it is representative of the great number of those in Satan’s service. Well, take a look and try to bring to mind how many organizations, visible and invisible, make up the great power of Satan: Freemasonry, Zionism, multitudes of heresies [Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism], occultism [witchcraft, and outright Satanism], anarchy, atheism, materialism, humanism, secularism, [totalitarian socialism/communism, multiculturalism, political correctness, entitlement, rights without responsibility, involuntary redistribution of wealth (theft), social justice, a guaranteed universal income, and other utopian ideals outside of God’s Kingdom] - all these and more are the many children and heads of the devil [which he uses to seduce the unwary]. With so many organizations, he has amassed great power, which he directs [directly and indirectly] against the Church.

Upon these 7 heads of the dragon are 7 crowns. The diadem, or crown, is the symbol of coronation; it is the praise of the qualities of the head or person on which it rests. It means that the head is worthy. However, it is also the symbol of authority. Because he is the prince of this world [as Jesus said, *the prince of this world cometh, and he hath nothing in Me* (John 14:30), he **has** authority [but **only** the type and amount of authority allotted to him by God]. Additionally, what receives praise, adulation and overall acceptance [in our modern world] is that which is evil and shameful, [more and more so as time goes by]. Today’s world crowns evil behavior because the entire world has succumbed to the evil one. The entire world finds itself under the authority of the evil one, and it is for this reason that the devil is presented [here by the Lord to Saint John] as powerful, with 7 crowns upon his head.

Revelation 12:4 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.

Archbishop Averky: By these stars which the devil draws after himself in his fall, commentators understand the fallen angels or demons. By them are also understood representatives of the churches and teachers who are corrupted by satanic power. As for the dragon standing before the woman, St. Andrew writes: “The devil always arms himself against the Church and increasingly strives to make those, reborn by her, his food (St. Andrew, ch. 33).

Archimandrite Athanasios: The devil drew with him those angels who accepted his prideful point of view, to reach auto-*theosis* (θεωσις), to become gods all by themselves. Thus,

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they fell to earth as dark angels or demons. [That is one interpretation.] The second possibility is that he throws down a third of the stars of heaven with his tail because they represent the unstable and short-rooted Christians. To be a Christian means to be a star firmly fixed in the firmament of the Church. However, when we are not [well] grounded [in the Church], then the devil stretches his tail and brings us down. Sadly, the devil truly pulls down a great number of Christians, especially if we take into account that a third of the stars (even though this is an allegorical number) is nonetheless a significant number showing that those who fall away to the influence of Satan are quite numerous. If we keep these things in mind -- that the devil is deceiving everyone on earth and he is pulling the faithful down from the firmament of the Church -- then we must understand that we cannot be careful enough.

[With regard to the phrase *and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, to devour her child as soon as it was born:*] This verse expresses the readiness and anticipation of the devil to tear into pieces anyone that might attempt to take [away] his authority, which he feels he has upon the earth. If you recall, one meaning of the woman *ready to give birth* is that she is the Theotokos while the other meaning is that She is the Church. That the devil is *ready to devour her child as soon as it was born* shows that he always remembers what God had said in the Garden of Eden to Adam and Eve that a descendent of Eve will crush his head. Since then, the devil began observing the birth of every male child to see if that child had those characteristics with which he might - might! - become his adversary.

Do you find it interesting that the devil was actually observing the birth of every male child? The Jews also practice this today - something you will also find interesting ...practicing Jews pay close attention to each male child born, thinking that he could be the prospective messiah. Naturally, every mother is especially happy when the newborn is a boy, always having the hope that this child may be the messiah. Unfortunately, we know that this child, who will be the messiah for them, will, in fact be the Antichrist [a Jew from the tribe of Dan as our Holy Fathers have told us]. As mentioned in our last class, conservative Jewish rabbis believe that the Messiah, the Christ, has just been born this year [on Tisha B'Av, our Jul 21, the day on which the last Temple was destroyed].

[Note:] *The dragon stood in front of the woman.* He stands before the pregnant Virgin Mary. Of course, he does not know that she is a virgin ... this escapes him [he is not all-knowing!] However, he stands; he lurks' he is extremely curious and watchful ... He stood before the woman who was about to give birth so that he might grab her child the moment he was born.

The second phase of this stance of the devil is the atrocity of Herod who would stop at nothing to kill Jesus in infancy. The devil saw the angels hymn and glorify God above the cave of the Nativity and he saw that the nearby shepherds behaved similarly. He saw the Wise Men, and keep in mind, the Magi arrived when Jesus was about one year old. Immediately after their arrival and departure, Herod started his murderous action against all the infants of his eparchy. So, the devil is behind Herod. When Herod plots against the life of the infant, it is the devil who stands to grab and devour this infant. He [the devil] concludes, based on all the wondrous signs, that this is, in fact, and extraordinary infant.

The third phase of this stance of the devil is the personal attack that he finally undertakes against Jesus in the desert. He had heard during Christ's baptism, *You are beloved Son in whom I*

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am well pleased (March 1:11). Then, the Evangelist clearly states that Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert, where the devil observes and tempts Him closely for 40 days. The devil observes and does not intervene. On the 40th day when Jesus is extremely hungry (having eaten nothing for those 40 days) the devil appears and tells Him to *tell these stones to become loaves of bread*, along with the other known temptations of greed and pride.

The fourth phase of the devil standing before Mary to grab her child is the death of Her Son on the cross. The fifth phase of this stance of the devil is every play and snare of Satan against the faithful people -- since the woman in this vision of [Saint] John the Evangelist refers not only to the Theotokos, the Virgin Mary, but also to the Church. This phrase is quite revealing : *so that he might devour Her child*. Not simply eat, but devour! Compare the dragon to a large crocodile, since a dragon is somewhat similar to a huge crocodile that lurks at the bank of the river, opening his huge jaws, ready to eat the newly born infant -- not to simply eat but to devour this infant -- an not leave a trace behind. This shows the mania of the dragon for whatever belongs to God. All these very descriptive images serve as a wonderful preparatory measure for the faithful people in the battle they are to undertake against the dragon ... They have been engaged in this battle against the dragon for centuries; [and now we need to be more prepared than ever, to be vigilant, watchful, faithful, and discerning. All of this requires the grace of the Holy Spirit abiding in us and in the Church, for us to continue faithfully following Christ, and participating in the Holy Mysteries of the Church, wherein we eat and drink the body and blood of Christ, and walk in His ways.]

Revelation 12:4b *and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. 5 And she brought forth a ~~man-child~~ [lit. a male (neuter accusative noun)], who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. 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.*

Ecumenius (a 6th century AD christian writer) writes: *and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born*. He is speaking of events in the Lord's life. Since He Who was to destroy Satan's dominion was going to be born, Satan watched with close attention, so that when the Virgin gave birth, he might kill the child. And so, too, he took no chances but incited Herod, a lascivious man with a harem of women, to destroy the male and manly child ... Reveal to us more clearly, O John, who this is who was born, this male child! He says, *who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron*. O inspired one, you have declared clearly to us that He is our Savior and Lord, Jesus, the Christ. For His own Father promised Him, *Ask of Me, and I will give to you the nations as your inheritance and the ends of the earth as your possession. You will shepherd them with a rod of iron, and you will dash them like a potter's vessel* (Psalm 2:8-9 [which we read every Saturday night at Vespers in the 1st Kathisma]).

And her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. The poisonous dragon lay in wait and incited Herod to kill the children in Bethlehem, thinking that certainly among them he would locate the Lord. But by the providence of the Father the child escaped the plot. For

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Joseph heard a warning from heaven and took the child and his mother and fled into Egypt, since Herod was seeking the life of the child. *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.* And so, the child saved from the plot of the dragon but was the woman given over to destruction? Indeed not. But she too was saved by the flight into Egypt, which is a desert, and there was free from the plot of Herod. And there she was hid away and nourished for 1260 days, which equals 3 1/2 years, more or less. Thus, for some such length of time the Mother of God remained in Egypt, until the death of Herod, after which another message from an angel [to Joseph] brought them back to Judæa.

Saint Methodios (died c. AD 311), *The Symposium: Logos 8, §7-9* offers a different opinion on the identities of the woman and the child: Christ Who was conceived long before the Apocalypse was not the child who was taken up to the throne of God for fear lest he be injured by the serpent; rather He descended from the throne of His Father and was begotten precisely that He might stay and check the dragon's assault on the flesh. Hence it is the Church that is in labor, and it is those who are washed in Baptism who are brought forth ... Now I think that the Church is here said to bring forth a man-child simply because the enlightened spirituality receive the features and image and manliness of Christ; the likeness of the Word is stamped on them and is begotten in each one. And so it is that the Church is with child and labors until Christ is formed and born within us, so that each of the saints by sharing in Christ is born again as Christ ... Those who are baptized in Christ become, as it were, other Christs, by a communication of the Spirit, and here it is the Church that effects this transformation into a clear image of the Word ... And thus it is that the Church is said ever to be forming and bringing forth a man-child, the word, in those who are sanctified.

Again, the devil misses and loses his prey, for the reborn are snatched up on high to the throne of God: that is, the minds of those who have been renewed are raised up to the divine throne and to the irrefragable [i.e., impossible to refute] foundation of truth, being taught to try to see and to picture to themselves the things of that world, and not to be tricked by the dragon who tries to prevail over them. For he is not permitted to destroy those who look upwards and are turned toward heaven.

Archbishop Averky (1906-1976): This is an image of Jesus Christ, as St. Andrew says: "In the person of those who are baptised, the Church ceaselessly gives birth to Christ just as, according to the Apostle [Paul], we come *unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ* (Eph. 4:13) ... Thus the Lord Jesus Christ was caught up to heaven on the day of His glorious ascension and sat upon the throne of His Father at His right hand; so also all the saints in whom Christ is depicted are caught up unto God so as not to be conquered by temptations which surpass their power. So also are all Christians of the last times to be caught up to *meet the Lord in the air* (1 Thess. 4:17).

[Thus, we see that both opinions are true. The Theotokos and her son Jesus Christ are portrayed here as the archtypes, which are prophetic of the Church and her sons & daughters, true Orthodox Christians, who having been born in the image of Christ, are struggling to grow

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into His likeness, struggling to grow into the measure, of the stature, of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:3). So what happened to the Theotokos and to Christ Jesus, in their respective earthly lives, is repeated in the life of the Church and her children. As St. John tells us in his Gospel 15:20 KJV: *The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.*]

Revelation 12:6 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.

Ecumenius above mentioned that the Theotokos fled into Egypt for 3 1/2 years, until King Herod died.

Archbishop Averky: By this flight of the woman into the wilderness, many see the flight of Christians from Jerusalem which had been besieged by the Romans at the time of the great Jewish War 66-70 A.D. Then people fled into Pella and the desert beyond the Jordan. [Into present day Jordan. This occurred a little before AD 70.]. This indeed lasted for three and a half years.

The Church historian Eusebius (c. AD 260-340) confirms this flight into Pella in his ***History of the Church***, 3.5.3: *“But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella.¹ And when those that believed in Christ had come thither from Jerusalem, then, as if the royal city of the Jews and the whole land of Judea were entirely destitute of holy men, the judgment of God at length overtook those who had committed such outrages against Christ and his apostles, and totally destroyed that generation of impious men.”*

Similarly, Archimandrite Athanasios notes that the Jewish/Roman 1st century AD Historian Flavius Josephus tells us the same thing: Moreover, Josephus tells us that 3 million Hebrews entered the walls of Jerusalem to be saved. So, it seems that God was collecting all the Jews who chose not to believe within the walls in order to destroy them, while He instructed the Christians to exit the city in order to save them. This indeed lasted for 3 1/2 years. By this wilderness one may see also that the wilderness where the first Christians saved themselves from the persecutors, and also that wilderness in which the holy ascetics saved themselves from the nets of the devil. It is not improbable also that the literal wilderness, as it did before for the martyrs, will save those who flee from the attacks of the apostate and false Christ [the Antichrist] into mountains, caves, and holes of the earth. The 3 1/2 years, signified by the 1260 days, is the time for the course of which the apostasy will reign.

The contemporary Orthodox Christian writer Vladimir Moss approaches this 3 1/2 year span from a much broader historical perspective. He writes in his commentary on the Apocalypse, the Book of the End:

1. Pella was a town situated beyond the Jordan, in the north of Perea, within the dominions of Herod Agrippa II. The surrounding population was chiefly Gentile. See Pliny V. 18, and Josephus, *B. J.* III. 3. 3, and I. 4. 8. Epiphanius (*De pond. et mens.* 15) also records this flight of the Christians to Pella.

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“Several of the most important periods of antichristian persecution in sacred history lasted for three and a half years. Thus the holy Prophet Elijah spent three and a half years in the wilderness, fleeing from Jezebel. And in the time of the Maccabees the temple was desecrated for three and a half years by Antiochus Epiphanes. And "Jesus Himself spent three and a half years in Egypt, fleeing from Herod" (Patriarch Anthimus[of Jerusalem]). And Christ's public ministry lasted for three and a half years, during the whole of which he was opposed by the Jewish Antichrist. And the Christians fled to Pella for three and a half years during the Romans' siege of Jerusalem in 66-70 A.D. And the persecution of Diocletian lasted for three and a half years, from February, 305 to July, 308 (Archbishop Averky). And the first and most destructive period of persecution of the Russian Church by the Soviet Antichrist lasted for about three and a half years, from October, 1917 to March, 1921, when the last major rebellion against Soviet rule in Kronstadt was crushed and the Tenth Party Congress set the seal on the doctrine of "democratic centralism", i.e. the dictatorship of Lenin. Finally, the persecution of the personal Antichrist will last for three and a half years. For, on the basis of several passages from Daniel and Revelation, the holy Fathers unanimously asserted that the reign of the personal Antichrist, the false messiah and king of the Jews, would last for seven years, the second half of which, three-and-a-half years or forty-two months in duration, would witness his persecution of the Church.

Revelation 12:7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, 8 And [he] prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth [the one leading astray] the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Averky: The most obvious interpretation of this passage is that it refers to "the first expulsion of the devil from the angelic ranks because of pride and envy [accomplished by the Archangel Michael and his angels] , and also to [the second expulsion at] his defeat by the cross of the Lord, when, as the Lord says, the prince of this world is condemned and cast out from his former lordship (John 12.31)" (St. Andrew of Caesarea). [scriptural context: 32 *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.* 33 *This he said, signifying what death he should die.*]

St. Justin the Martyr (AD 100-165) writes: "Before the Lord's appearance [on earth] Satan never dared to blaspheme God, inasmuch as he did not yet know his own sentence, because it was contained in parables and allegories. But after the Lord's appearance, when he had clearly ascertained from the words of Christ and His apostles that eternal fire had been prepared for him [because] he had apostasized from God of his own free-will, and likewise for all those who continue impenitently in their apostasy, he now blasphemes" (St. Justin, in St. Irenaeus, Against Heresies, V, 26, 2) - and with great wrath, for he knows that he hath but a short time ...

Archbishop Averky: Perhaps the reference is to two battles in which he is defeated: "one with the Archangel Michael and his heavenly hosts in heaven, and the other with the martyrs of Christ on earth. Satan has still preserved some appearance of power on earth, crawling over it

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like a serpent. Having come to his last days on earth, Satan is devising a last and decisive battle with God and believing Christians with the aid of the Antichrist and his accomplice the false prophet.

“Alternatively, a single battle is being referred to, a battle on earth, but painted in the colours of the primeval, heavenly battle. This is the battle of the Orthodox Church with the revolution, in which the Lord, through the prayers of the angels and martyrs, expels the devil from "heaven" - that is, the Church, into which he has insinuated himself by force and deceit. In this battle of the last times there will arise, according to the Archangel Gabriel, the great Archangel Michael, the great prince who stands for the sons of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as has never been since there was a nation till now (Daniel 12.1).”

Archimandrite Athanasios (1927-2006): *Rev. 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth [the one leading astray] the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him ...* “the Holy Evangelist tells us, that a war takes place in heaven between Archangel Michael and the rest of the angels and the dragon with his angels the demons. The dragon did not prevail; he could not defeat the Archangel Michael and there was no longer a place for the devil in heaven.

“A number of the angels wished to become gods in their own right and they were separated from God. This separation of Satan and his angels from God was not something passive, it was an action against God. That is why the archangel’s name is *Satan*. It is a Hebrew word meaning the one who takes a position against God, one who opposes God. After this action, Satan together with his demons were stripped of their God-like state. They remain dark and can no longer have any place in heaven ... This is the first fall of Satan and as there was no place for him any longer in heaven, as the holy Evangelist tells us, he fell on earth.

He is also called the ancient serpent, which hints at his history, when he appeared as a serpent to the first created beings in paradise and managed to deceive Adam and Eve ... He is also called *diabolos* (from the Greek word *διαβόλη* (diaboli), meaning slander). He slandered God to the first created humans by telling them that God had told them not to try the fruit of the tree because He is jealous and does not want them to become Gods like Him. This action gave him the name *diabolos or the devil, the father of lies, as he slandered God to the first created humans ...*

The second fall of Satan is the one that took place through the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Saint Andrew of Caesarea describes this very beautifully. “The first fall of the devil from the angelic order was due to arrogance and great jealousy. When Christ was crucified, the ruler of this world was judged, and then the prince of this world was cast out. This describes the second fall of Satan [It is this fall that is referred to here in Rev 12:9]. There is also a third fall. The third and final defeat of Satan will take place when Christ will return to the world. In Revelation we read, *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 for ever and ever* (20:10).

Revelation 12:10 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. 11 And they

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overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. 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.



Revelation 12:10a 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:

Archimandrite Athanasios: [Here St. John the Theologian says he heard a loud voice in heaven.] “The great and loud voice comes from the 24 presbyters, the righteous, and the martyrs in heaven who are the Church Triumphant ... The voice of the righteous is saying that now salvation has come. It [came] the moment the devil [was] defeated in heaven [by the crucifixion, harrowing of hell, and the resurrection in which Christ took those Old Testament righteous, who

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were captive in hades and took them to paradise. It was then that] the salvation, the power, the Kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ [became] a reality ... do not forget that the prophets and the righteous of the Old Testament were victims of the devil, of hades, and they were in a state of expectation concerning the time of the crucifixion -- the moment [that] the sacrifice of Christ ... would bring about the redemption of all those held captive in hades. Even those who had prophesied about Christ had to wait. They believed, and they were in full expectation, when after all the waiting, they [saw that] that which they have been expecting [had] been fulfilled. For this reason, they [broke] out in a loud cry of praise and express[ed] their thanksgiving to God.

Revelation 12:10b for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

Archimandrite Athanasios: “Interesting indeed is the fact that the devil appears here as an accuser of people -- day and night [--as he did with the patriarch St. Job]. What is of interest to us here is that the devil accuses the saints before God. He says that they are worthless, that their motives are insincere. Of course, he accuses those who distance themselves from God even more just so he can exult in their punishment and truly rejoice that he has nullified the saving work of God. He rejoices when someone sins, and then asks God, “Did you see him?” It gives him much more joy when a baptized Christian sins. ”Did you see him,” he asks God. The devil himself causes the difficulties, and then throws him down and then, he has the audacity to turn to God and say to Him, “Do you see what kind of believer You have”?” And when God punishes a sinner, the devil becomes full of demonic joy.

Rev 12:11 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.

Archimandrite Athanasios: “The victory of the saints had three ... causes. The first, according to the holy text, is through *the blood of the Lamb*. It is the victory of Christ against the devil, due to His sacrifice on the Cross -- the sacrifice by which the faithful become participants and make it their own through their belief in the God-human person of Jesus Christ. Although Christ is the victor, when the faithful believe in Christ they make the victory of Christ against the devil their own through the power of *the blood of the Lamb* that defeated the devil.

“The second victory of the saints is through *the word of their testimony*. It is the preaching of the confession that the faithful make about the God-human person of Christ. Christ died; He resurrected; He shall come to judge the living and the dead; He is the God-appointed Messiah. As Apostle Paul declares. *Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Amen (Phil 2:9:11)*. Any faithful person who confesses Christ in this manner gives the good testimony before the apostate world.

“The third victory is martyrdom; *they loved not their lives unto death*. Since the faithful make their good confession about Jesus Christ and bring it before the world, it is understood and

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expected that they will be subjected to every form of martyrdom from an apostate world ... In other words, the one who counts his earthly life as nothing, who refuses to let go of his Christian beliefs in order to be accepted by this fallen world, even if that may mean death, is the faithful one who will save his soul eternally in the Kingdom of God ... therefore, the third [cause] of the victory against the devil is the self-sacrifice of the faithful for the name of Christ, even if a martyr's death is required.

“For those who are still on earth, pious and impious alike, woe to them -- because the devil is furious. His fury arises from his failure to win the battle against his most formidable adversary, Jesus Christ.

“The devil knows that this short time is the time [only that] between the 1st and 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ. He doesn't know when the 2nd Coming will occur, but he knows that it will occur because he knows Scripture quite well. In fact, the devil is very knowledgeable about Scripture, but he knows the word of God diabolically. He also helps the heterodox read it diabolically. When Scripture is read heretically, it is understood diabolically, because the criterion of the Truth is lost. [E.g., the heresy of the pre-millennial rapture professed by the vast majority of Evangelical and Messianic Jewish Christians, who look forward to the and the establishment of a 1000 year reign of Christ on earth in a Millennial kingdom before the 7 year Tribulation period and the Great Judgment, are thus susceptible to fall into the delusion of the Antichrist & his kingdom.]”

Revelation 12:13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. 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.

Vladimir Moss (contemporary) writes about the expression: *A time, and times, and half a time*. This phrase, [originally] taken from the Prophet Daniel (Daniel 7.25, 12.7), signifies three-and-a-half years according to SS. Cyril of Jerusalem, Ephraim the Syrian, John Chrysostom, Augustine, ... and Andrew of Caesarea. In other places in the Apocalypse the same period is described as forty-two months or 1260 days.”

“The first period in the history of the Church in which the faithful had to flee into the wilderness from an antichristian persecution was the seven-year period of Midianite oppression – seven years is the period that the Antichrist is prophesied to reign - in the time of Gideon. Thus because of the Midianites the children of Israel made for themselves the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strongholds (Judges 6.2). They wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth (Hebrews 11.38).”

Saint Hippolytos (AD 170-235) tells us more about this 3 1/2 year period in his, *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist* ¶¶ 61: This [phrase] refers to the one thousand two hundred and three score days (the half of the week [the 2nd half of the 7 year Tribulation period]) during which the tyrant is to reign and persecute the Church, which flees from city to city and seeks concealment in the wilderness among the mountains, possessed of no other defense than the two wings of the great eagle, that is to say, the faith of Jesus Christ, Who, in stretching forth His holy hands on the holy Tree, unfolded two wings, the right and the left, and called to Him all who believed upon

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Him, and covered them as a hen [does with] her chickens [with her wings]. For by the mouth of Malachias also He speaks thus: *But to you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise, and healing shall be in His wings (Malachi 4:2).*”

St. Andrew of Caesarea (AD 563-637) says: “and so it is always, but especially at the coming of Antichrist who will reign for 3 1/2 years. At that time it may be there will escape from him those who have hidden in the literal wilderness -- the mountains, holes, and caves.”

Vladimir Moss: "Just as the Soviet kingdom is a prefiguration of the Antichrist, so also the 'Catacomb' Church is the nearest of all prefigurations of the Church in the time of the Antichrist - the Woman clothed with the sun who has fled into the wilderness. Her garments are woven of the exploits of saints. Just as in the time of the Prophet Elijah, the Lord has preserved for Himself seven thousand faithful, until the time known to Him alone." (in Andreyev, op. cit., pp. 539-41).

“Holy New Martyr Schema-Monk Epiphanius (Chernov) (20th century) writes: "The True Church of Christ during the period of the Antichrist's rule, through Her very refusal to compromise with him as being the enemy of God and the destroyer of man annihilating the Church, cannot exist and operate in the open. She flees to the mountains, to the desert. She hides Herself in caves and dens of the earth. However, all these expressions, being of a prophetic nature, must be understood, not literally, but allegorically, as images and symbols of the fact that the True Church of Christ, being inspired from above, in one way or another departs into obscurity, becomes unnoticed, absent from external life, invisible, unapproachable, secret, hidden from the Antichrist destroyer and from his numerous atheist and antitheist servants."

“Holy New Martyr St. Anatolius II of Optina (+1922) prophesied concerning the snares that the devil would set for the Catacomb Church: "Heresies will spread everywhere and deceive many people. The enemy of the human race will act with cunning in order to draw into heresy, if possible, even the elect. He will not begin by crudely rejecting the dogmas of the Holy Trinity, the Divinity of Jesus Christ and the virtue of the Theotokos, but he will begin imperceptibly to distort the teachings and statutes of the Church and their very spirit, handed down to us by the Holy Fathers through the Holy Spirit. Few will notice these wiles of the enemy, only those more experienced in the spiritual life. Heretics will seize power over the Church and will place their servants everywhere; the pious will be regarded with contempt. He (the Lord) said, 'by their fruits ye shall know them', and so, by their fruits, as well as by the actions of the heretics, strive to distinguish them from the true pastors. These are spiritual thieves, plundering the spiritual flock, and they will enter the sheepfold (the Church), climbing up some other way, as the Lord said: They will enter by an unlawful way, using force and trampling upon the Divine statutes. The Lord calls them robbers (cf. John 10.1). Indeed, their first task will be the persecution of the true pastors, their imprisonment and exile, for without this it will be impossible for them to plunder the sheep. [And of course this began in earnest after the Bolshevik Russia in 1917, and in Greece after adoption of the New Calendar and modernist ideas.]

“Therefore, my son, when you see the violation of patristic tradition and the Divine order in the Church, the order established by God, know that the heretics have already appeared, although for the time being they may conceal their impiety. Or they will distort the Divine Faith

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imperceptibly, in order to succeed better in seducing and enticing the inexperienced into the net. The persecution will be directed against not only pastors but against all servants of God, for all those ruled by heresy will not endure piety. Recognize these wolves in sheep's clothing by their proud dispositions and love of power. They will be slanderers, traitors, everywhere sowing enmity and malice. Therefore the Lord said that by their fruits you will know them. True servants of God are humble, love their neighbour and are obedient to the Church. Monastics will be greatly oppressed by the heretics and monastic life will be scorned. Monasteries will become scarce, the number of monastics will decline, and those who remain will endure violence. These haters of monastic life, however, having only the appearance of piety, will strive to attract the monks to their side, promising them protection and worldly goods, and threatening those who oppose them with expulsion. These threats will cause great despair among the fainthearted, but you, my son, rejoice that you have lived until that time, for then the faithful who have not shown any other virtues, will receive crowns merely for standing firm in the faith, according to the word of the Lord (cf. Matthew 10.32). Fear the Lord, my son. Fear to lose the crown prepared (for you), fear to be cast by Christ into the outer darkness and eternal torment. Stand bravely in the faith, and if necessary, endure persecution and other sorrows, for the Lord will be with you... and the holy martyrs and confessors, they will look upon you and your struggle with joy. But woe to the monks in those days who will be bound by possessions and riches, who because of love of peace will be ready to submit to the heretics. They will lull to sleep their conscience, saying, 'We are preserving and saving the monastery and the Lord will forgive us.' The unfortunate and blind ones do not at all consider that through heresy the demons will enter the monastery and then it will no longer be a holy monastery, but merely walls from which grace will depart. God, however, is more mighty than the enemy, and He will never leave His servants. True Christians will remain until the end of this age, only they will choose to live in secluded, deserted places. Do not fear sorrows, rather fear pernicious heresy, for it strips us of grace and separates us from Christ. This is why the Lord commanded us to consider the heretic as a pagan and a publican. And so, my son, strengthen yourself in the grace of Jesus Christ. Hasten to confess the faith, to endure suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (cf. II Timothy 2.1-3), Who has said, 'Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life' (Revelation 2.10). To Him, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be honour, glory and dominion unto the ages of ages. Amen."²⁵⁶

Another Optina elder, St. Barsanuphius (+1912) said: "In the last days before the Coming of Christ the Church will be completely preserved in this form: one Orthodox bishop, one Orthodox priest and one Orthodox layman. I am not telling you that there will be no churches at all, perhaps there will be some, but Orthodoxy will be preserved only in this form. You mark my words. You know, this will be throughout the world."

Revelation 12:15 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. 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.

Archbishop Averky: By this *water* St. Andrew understands "a multitude either of evil demons or of various temptations." By the earth which swallows up this water he understands "the humility of wisdom of the saints who, saying from all their heart, *I am but earth and ashes*

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(Gen 18:27), by this very confession rip apart all the nets of the devil. For, as was revealed by the angel to the divine Antony, nothing so crushes and cuts off the power of the devil as humility” (St. Andrew, ch. 35). Certain people understand by this, frightful persecutions against the Church from the pagan emperors and the streams of Christian blood which flowed at that time. Like a river which overflows upon the earth and is swallowed up by it, all the malicious powers of Satan were destroyed and vanished without a trace when Christianity triumphed over paganism under Emperor Constantine the Great.

Vladimir Moss: Tikhomirov writes: “By the Woman interpreters understand the Church. By the child – the believers borne by her. By the desert is to be understood the world which is estranged from Christ. The sea signifies the turbulent masses of the peoples. The earth is the peoples, but in a cultural sense [for ‘the cultural earth will probably always serve as a hindrance to such destructive attacks of the mob’]. The flood of water is the striving of the peoples.”

Revelation 12:17 And the dragon was wrath 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.

Archbishop Averky: This refers to that unceasing and age-old battle which the devil has waged against all true sons of the Church from the time of the foundation of Christianity upon the earth, and which he will wage with an ever increasing degree to the end of the world until his efforts will be worn out and will end in the person of the Antichrist.

So, for us, we need to rejoice, stand strong in our Orthodox Faith, be vigilant to the attacks of the Satan, the Antichrist, and his minions -- the demons, heretics, and others who follow lawlessness. We need to discern the spirits of our time and of men, whether they be of God, or of man, or of Satan.

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Amen