

## INTRODUCTION to REVELATION chapter 12

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## 1 THE THEME

### ***THE REAL REASON FOR THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD IS THE WARFARE BETWEEN CHRIST AND SATAN***

## 2 THE STRUCTURE

Revelation chapter 12 to 14 describe the whole New Testament period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. Revelation chapter 12 to 14 describes the conflict between Christ and Satan (the dragon) as the real background and of the conflict between the Church and the world. Revelation chapter 1 to 11 described this conflict between the Church and the world and is but the outward manifestation of the conflict between Christ and Satan. Throughout the Old Testament period Satan had continually tried to hinder the first coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ (12:1-4), but at his first coming (12:5) Satan is conquered.

### **a. The beginning of the New Testament period in which Satan is conquered (12:1-10)**

Revelation 12:1-4 describes *in symbolic language* the Old Testament period until the first coming of Jesus Christ. Throughout the whole Old Testament period the dragon (Satan) struggled against the woman (God's people Israel) in order to prevent her from bringing forth a male child (the Messiah, Jesus Christ). The reason for this struggle was that God had promised that Jesus Christ would crush the head of Satan (Genesis 3:15). But throughout the whole Old Testament period Satan failed to prevent the birth of the Messiah.

Revelation 12:5 describes *in symbolic language* the birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement in heaven of Jesus Christ. It says, "She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne." Also at the first coming of Christ Satan failed to destroy the Messiah. Instead, Christ conquered Satan by his life, death and resurrection!

Revelation 12:7-11 describes in symbolic language *the results* of Christ's first coming:

- Satan is evicted from heaven as the accuser of believers and smacked onto the earth (12:7-9; cf. 9:1). This means that Satan's head has been crushed (Genesis 3:15). It means that Satan is now bound – his power is curbed, curtailed, restrained, limited (20:3). Satan is not omnipresent and also not omnipotent.
- God's salvation worked through Christ becomes manifest, God's sovereign power in heaven *and on earth* is vindicated, God's kingship or rule in the hearts and lives of people on earth is established and the authority of Christ in heaven *and on earth* is revealed (12:10; cf. Matthew 28:18). Salvation and Christ's kingdom are a reality throughout the whole New Testament period.

Since the first coming of Christ the final triumph of God through Christ is secure! *What remains is that this triumph must be worked out throughout history.* That is why the whole New Testament history is called 'the

last days'<sup>1</sup> (cf. 2 Timothy 3:1). Notice that the kingdom of Christ begins at his appearing (2 Timothy 4:1). That is why the whole New Testament history is even called 'the last hour'<sup>2</sup> (1 John 2:18). 'The last days' *begin* with Christ's first coming (Acts 2:17; Hebrews 1:2; 9:26; 1 Peter 1:20)<sup>3</sup> and *end* with Christ's second coming (John 6:39-40; 12:48)<sup>4</sup>. Satan and the powers in this world can no longer hinder the triumphant march of the gospel throughout New Testament history! Christians overcome Satan by the completed work of salvation of Christ on the cross, by their proclamation of the gospel and by their selfless and sacrificial lives (12:11)!

#### **b. The long period of proclaiming the gospel in which Satan persecutes the Church and Christians (12:11-18)**

Revelation 12:6,11-16 describes *in symbolic language* the long New Testament period during which God's people (the Church) is persecuted by Satan, but also is protected by God's sovereign dealings in history. This persecution is summarised by the words, "The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1260 days" (12:6) or "a time, times and half a time" (12:14). The reason for this persecution is that Satan knows that his time is very short (12:12). Satan is not eternal.

The dragon pursues the woman (12:13), but the woman is given the wings of an eagle (12:14). The Church endures terrible persecution from Satan, but God's instruments ("they": humans, events, circumstances) (12:6) keep the Church as institute or organism (the woman) out of Satan's reach (12:6,12-14). Compare this with the fact that the dragon remains bound for a thousand years (20:1-7). During this long period the Church cannot and is not destroyed.

The dragon spews water like a river in order to sweep her away with the torrent (12:15), but the earth opens its mouth and swallows the river (12:16). Satan employs lies, delusions and deceit (Luke 8:14; 2 Corinthians 2:11; 2 Timothy 3:1-7; 4:10; 2 Peter 2:20; 1 John 2:16-17) to seduce the Church away from Christ (12:15; cf. 16:13-14). But the worldly powers are so divided that they cannot work together to destroy the Church as institute that proclaims the gospel. Instead, they work against each other and break one another's power and schemes. When 'horns' that scatter God's people arise, then God brings 'smiths' to chop these horns off (Zechariah 1:18-21; cf. 1 Samuel 23:26-28)(12:16)!

Revelation 12:17 describes *in symbolic language* that during this period individual Christians are also persecuted by Satan. "The rest of her offspring" refers to individual Christians. Satan tries to deceive all the people of every nation and tries to keep all of them away from the gospel. He will not succeed!

Revelation 12:18 describes *in symbolic language* that during this period Satan's power is bound, curbed, curtailed, restrained or limited. The dragon does not stand in the sea, but has to stand on the shore of the sea. The sea is a symbol for the nations of the world. Therefore the dragon (Satan) employs beasts coming out of the sea to help him destroy the Church and Christians.

### **3 THE CONTENTS**

The message of Revelation chapter 12 is that Christ has already conquered Satan by his incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement in heaven and that Satan can no longer hinder the triumphant march of the gospel throughout history on earth. But before the final end, both the Church (the woman) and individual Christians (her offspring) will be persecuted by Satan. The Church is on her way to the great 'not yet', to the reality of what she already is in Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> εν εσχαταις ημεραις

<sup>2</sup> εσχατη ωρα εστιν (vira--3s)

<sup>3</sup> επ εσχατου των ημερων; επι συντελεια των αιωνων

<sup>4</sup> συντελεια αιωνος εστιν; συντελειας του αιωνος

The Book of Revelation with all its signs and symbols is *a backwards-prophecy*: it uncovers the deepest significance of the historical events that have already happened between the creation and the first century A.D. in the light of God (heaven) and against the background of the coming end-time.

All the following contributed to that one great event: the attempt to hinder the coming of the promised Messiah: Cain murdering his brother; Lamech blurting out pride and blasphemy; the builders of the tower of Babel arrogantly defying God; Pharaoh oppressing and persecuting God's people; the Philistines, Moabites, Edomites and Ammonites attacking Israel; Sanherib of the Assyrians, Nebuchadnezzar of the Babylonians, Antiochus of the Syrians and Herod of the Romans.

*The deepest significance of the history of the Old Testament is the dragon standing in front of the woman ready to destroy her child when it was born.*

#### **a. The great and wondrous sign (12:1)<sup>5</sup>**

John sees a great and wondrous sign that appears in heaven. He is given the ability to see the deepest background of the things and events that appear in the world and in its history. *The sign* is the light of God (the perspective of heaven) that allows John to see the reality of the powers that move history on earth.

The Church is not yet what she really is and also the kingdoms of the world are not yet what they really are. Christ reveals the reality of the Church and the reality of the kingdoms of the world to John. The things in the world and in history are in the progress of becoming what they really are. The camouflage masks are falling away and the beautiful reality of the Kingdom of God (the Church) and the terrible reality of the antichristian kingdoms of the world are appearing more and more!

#### **b. The woman (12:1-2)<sup>6</sup>**

The symbol of the woman stands for the Church in the centre of the universe, surrounded by the universe (sun, moon and stars). The woman is the community<sup>7</sup> of God. In the Old Testament her destiny was to give birth to Jesus Christ (the Messiah)(12:2). In the New Testament she is persecuted and always fleeing because she belongs to Jesus Christ (12:6).

The community of God (the Church) is decorated with the sun, moon and stars only *because* she is the mother of Jesus according to his human nature. But it is Jesus Christ who is God that took on the human nature (John 1:1-18; 14:9) the real Light of the world (John 8:12), who saves the Church, bears the Church and gives her such glory. It is Jesus Christ who is the centre of the universe around which everything else revolves. He stands in the centre of the throne in heaven (6:6).

The Church symbolised by the woman is a strange phenomenon in this present world and goes through the world in disguise. She wears the crown, is the mother of the Great Conqueror (Jesus Christ) and shares in his triumph. And yet she is persecuted and flees. In this present history of the world the Church seems to be what she by God's grace never in reality is. She is a fleeing woman instead of a crowned queen. Her existence on earth is a paradox, a mystery, a riddle. Christians are "more than conquerors" (Romans 8:37), but also "the scum of the world, the refuse of the world" (1 Corinthians 4:13). Christians possess a treasure: the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ, but carry this treasure in jars of clay (their weak and persecuted bodies) to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from them. Christians are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. They always carry around in their body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in their body (2 Corinthians 4:7-10). In this life the crown of victory never becomes completely visible; the disguise is never completely discarded.

How does the Church behave in this disguise? The Church can do it in the Pergamum way: courageous during political persecution and yet plagued by compromisers in her midst. She can do it in the Smyrna way:

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<sup>5</sup> cf. Bavinck pp. 22-23

<sup>6</sup> cf. Bavinck pp. 13-17, 232-233

<sup>7</sup> Greek: ekklesia = Church

faithful during religious persecution and yet afraid of suffering. She can do it in the Laodicea way: grey and cold during materialistic affluence and yet not abandoned by Christ (Revelation chapters 2 and 3).

The Church still lives in the great 'not yet'. The Bible says: "At present we do not see everything subject to Christ" (Hebrews 2:8), but "only Jesus crowned with glory and honour" (Hebrews 2:9). We cannot yet *see* that all things are subject to Christ and his Church.

The book of Revelation gives Christians a glimpse behind the scenes. For a while Christians may look through the outward appearance of the things and events in the world and see their deepest reality. The things and events in the world are not what they appear to be. Everything is masked and camouflaged to appear different than it really is. The book of Revelation reveals their progress: the things and events in the world are becoming more and more what they really are: masks are being put off and all camouflage is dropping off; evil and righteousness are becoming more and more visible. The struggle is in progress. Darkness resists the light, but the Light is conquering the darkness, the Truth is overcoming the lies and the great 'not yet' is becoming the great reality in Christ.

In God's plan the woman (the Church) must become what she in reality already is in Christ. At present she still stands in the great not-yet. Her cries of agony in labour represent the Old Testament history of God's community (Church). She carried the Child, the Messiah, and that is why she was persecuted. *The Old Testament history is not about Israel, but in reality about the Messiah (Jesus Christ) that would come forth from Israel!* Of course Egypt and Babylon had no notion about the Messiah and thought only of Israel. But the things and events in the world are more than they appear to be. There are deeper realities behind the historical events! There are powers behind these historical events that have their own agenda.

*Therefore the Church is not yet what she really is, namely, the woman clothed with the sun and everything subject to her! That is the purpose of God's history of salvation: that the woman becomes what she is in Christ.*

### **c. The dragon (12:3-4)**

The dragon is not the ancient mythical sea-monster, the personification of the powers of chaos in the universe. The dragon represents the devil. His red colour represents the fire of his hatred. His seven heads represent the powerful political empires that appear in the history of the world, which differ in culture and size, but all have the same thing in common: they are the heads of the devil. His ten horns represent these empires as they sometimes appear in history: kingdoms that aggressively push and destroy. Together these empires form one monster! Christ through John does not want to give us a schematic representation of the history of these empires, but reveals their reality, their real identity!

This does not mean that every empire in history was and is only demonic! That is why Christ uses the mysterious symbol of the dragon with its seven heads. The Old Testament empires like Ancient Babylonia, Egypt, Assyria, New Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome were also the protectors of law and culture and were a blessing in many ways. That is the mystery of the history of the world: nothing is absolutely what it appears to be. Babylon was not only ungodly and anti-Christian; it was also the culmination of the history of culture. Within its borders there was law and order. Babylon is described as the tallest and strongest tree, with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food and shelter for all the beasts of the field and birds of the air (Daniel 4:20-22). But Babylon is also the empire that dashed infants against rocks (Psalm 137:9)! A power was hiding in Babylon that was through and through demonic. It was proud, tyrannical and desired power beyond all limits. Thus also Babylon was not yet what it is in its deepest reality.

*Therefore the empires or kingdoms of the world are not yet what they really are, namely, the seven heads of the dragon!*

#### **d. The male child (12:5)**<sup>8</sup>

The male child is a symbol of Jesus Christ at his first coming. “He is snatched up to God and his throne” is a symbol of his birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement. The evil powers and evil kingdoms of the world can no longer target him. He is unreachable and unconquerable! He is destined to triumph over all the evil kingdoms and evil powers. The sceptre is the symbol of his reign and judgement.

*Therefore the male child is not yet what it really is, namely, the One chosen to destroy all the godless nations with an iron rod!*

#### **e. The 1260 days (12:6)**

Because the male child (Jesus Christ) is unreachable and unconquerable, the dragon (Satan) switches his attack to the woman (the Church). The woman is persecuted *because* she gave birth to the male child. The Community of God’s people in the Old Testament (Israel)(John 4:22, Acts 13:3; Galatians 4:4-5) gave birth to the Messiah and that is why the Community of God’s people in the New Testament (the Church) is now persecuted! The Church is persecuted for 1260 days, a symbol for the whole New Testament period.

*The real significance of the history of the world* actually ends with the death and resurrection of Christ about two thousand years ago.<sup>9</sup> All the historical events after the first coming of Christ are *the outworking or realisation* of his once for all time great victory in his death and his resurrection! On the cross Jesus Christ said, “It is finished”<sup>10</sup> (John 19:30)! Jesus Christ has conquered and is now going forth conquering (Revelation 6:2) during the last phase of human history, called “the end of the ages”. The expression ‘the end of the ages’ is conceived as the period from the close of the Old Testament period at the first coming of Christ (Hebrews 1:2; 9:26) until the close of the New Testament period at the second coming of Christ (Matthew 13:39; 24:3; Ephesians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 10:11). During the outworking or realisation of the completed work of salvation of Christ, Christ says: “In the world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world”<sup>11</sup> (John 16:33).

*Therefore the real significance of history is that the victory of Christ at his first coming is worked out or realised in the historical events throughout the whole New Testament period.*

#### **f. The struggle in heaven (12:7-9)**<sup>12</sup>

Christ reveals through John that there are two chains of historical events that unfold: one in heaven and one on earth. And the struggle in heaven affects the struggle on earth.

The ancient people always believed that the stars in heaven determined the events on earth: what appeared in heaven would soon become visible on earth (astrology). But Christ reveals in prophecy and in Revelation that it is not the stars in the sky that determine the events on earth, but the struggle between Christ and his angels against Satan and his demons in the spiritual realm! It is in heaven, the place that cannot be penetrated with human eyes, where events unfold that have such vast significance for the peoples on earth!

Already during the Old Testament the angel revealed to Daniel that there are wars in heaven against the evil princes of the kingdoms on earth that precede parallel wars on earth in the kingdoms of the world (Daniel 10:12-13,20-21). The book of Daniel not only reveals the recurring rise and demise of the kingdoms of the world (the four beasts representing four kingdoms)(Daniel 7:17), but also the continuation of the kingdom of God (Daniel 7:18)!

We are so used to look at the history of the world on earth as something that should be understood by itself, that we cannot imagine that there exists another scene in heaven, in which the same conflicts take place.

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<sup>8</sup> cf. Bavinck pp. 23-26

<sup>9</sup> cf. Bavinck pp. 25-26

<sup>10</sup> τέτελεσται (vīp). The perfect tense expresses a continuous present. The completed action remains a continuous present reality.

<sup>11</sup> ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ θλίψιν ἔχετε (vīpā). ἀλλὰ θάρσειτε > θάρσειω (vīpā), ἐγὼ ὑενικηκῶ > νικῶ (vīrā) τὸν κόσμον.

The perfect tense expresses a continuous present. The completed action remains a continuous present reality.

<sup>12</sup> cf. Bavinck pp. 26-38



Christians must thoroughly revise their understanding of the universe (cosmology) and their understanding of history! The events in human history cannot simply be explained from the events themselves. The events in human history have their own dynamic and responsibility. And yet they are connected to the mysterious events taking place in heaven and are influenced by these events in heaven. The ancient peoples believed that the events on earth were mere copies of the events in heaven. They feared the inescapable powers of fate. *But the Bible reveals that the events in heaven affect the events on earth and that the events on earth, especially the plight of the woman and her children (the Church and Christians) affect the events in heaven! Human history is not purely secular, explicable from the events themselves. Human history is connected to both the events unfolding on earth and the impenetrable mystery of the events taking place in heaven!*

How was it possible for Satan to have access to heaven?

Satan has two appearances in the Bible: he is the deceiver and the accuser. Satan is the deceiver that misleads people into temptation (Genesis 3). He is the arch liar (John 8:44) that paints pictures of salvation that actually draw people into damnation. The Hindus call it Maya (illusion). Satan is the king of illusion.

But Satan is also the terrible accuser of people before God's throne (Job 1). During the Old Testament period Satan had access to God's throne and accused people before God of being corrupt. There was truth in his accusation, because peoples' sin had not been punished and their sins had not been atoned and that gave him power over people. But after Christ made atonement for sin and forgave all the sins of those who trust in him, Satan lost his semblance of truth. The war in heaven is about the legal ground of justification (forgiveness, salvation). Christ took all Satan's ground of justice away and had Satan and his demons thrown out of heaven. Satan can never again appear in heaven to accuse Christians before God. No one can condemn Christians (Romans 8:33-34)! By his death and resurrection Christ conquered Satan.

The consequence of Christ's victory is that the fundamental structure of the universe changed. Only Christ reveals how this victory affects what is happening on earth today. What is happening *after* the death and resurrection of Christ is that 'the things that are already certain' (in heaven) must become a reality (on earth)!

The name of the angel, Michael, means 'who is like God?' Only Christ is like God! The angel does not act on his own against Satan. He acts against Satan in the authority and power of Christ and his victory at his first coming. The dragon (Satan) and his angels (demons) lost their place in heaven (Revelation 12:8). They lost their position of appearing legally just. They lost their position of power! They are hurled down onto the earth and fall as quick as lightning (Luke 10:18).

The woman (the Church) is oppressed and persecuted throughout her difficult journey in history, looking expectedly forward to her final and complete liberation.

#### **g. The demonic world (12:10-12)**<sup>13</sup>

After Christ's victory, one would expect increasing peace and blessing on earth. But Christ reveals to John that the world has become more demonic! Things on earth do not become better; instead they become worse! While Revelation 12:9 says that Satan has been *hurled down* to the earth, Revelation 12:12 says that Satan *came down* to earth filled with fury. Satan turns his defeat into a new activity: he assembles all his demons and pursues the woman and her offspring (the Church and the Christians).

*Although Satan has lost his position of justice before God it does not automatic follow that he lost his position of power on earth. From now on events on earth develop with breathless speed towards becoming the chaotic and mad world* (John 15:18-25; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 1 Peter 4:3; 1 John 2:16-17; Revelation 22:11a).

God allows this to happen because of a very important reason. The things and events in the world are not yet what they really are. They still appear different than they really are. The cloud of illusion and insincerity covers the world as a curse and in this mist the history of the world races on.

What is the character of the history of the world?

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<sup>13</sup> cf. Bavinck pp. 38-45

Many parts of the world have remained virtually unchanged and people continue to live as they always did. But during the past six centuries great changes have taken place in many other parts of the world: the discovery of new places; colonialism (the exploitation of other countries); the rise of empires; the establishment of large cities; industrialisation; the explosion of science and mass communication; the revolutions, world wars, the movement of refugees, the internationalisation of cultures and the failure of healthy relations and communication between these cultures. The speed of life accelerated, inexplicable anxieties increased and indescribable chaos erupted. Is this what is meant by the words: “woe to the earth because the devil has gone down to you”? The demonic powers know that their time on earth is short; their place in heaven has already been taken from them and their power on earth is nearing its end (Revelation 12:12)! Paul says: “The world in its present form is passing away” (1 Corinthians 7:31).

#### **h. The Christian world (12:13-18)**<sup>14</sup>

What is the place where Christians stand?

Since the first coming of Christ salvation, the kingdom and the authority of his Christ has come (Revelation 12:10)! It is now a present reality (Matthew 12:28-29).

Also real is that the dragon (Satan) pursues the woman (the Church). He spews his poisonous venom, deceit and lies like a river to deluge the Church. His purpose is to choke the Church in his lies. The Church stands in the dark desert between the mountaintop of Christ’s first coming and the mountaintop of Christ’s second coming. That is where the Church must live with Christ and that is where she must serve Christ. And when Christ protects the Church out of reach of the dragon’s final destruction, the dragon switches his attacks to the individual Christians (Revelation 12:17).

Christians live on earth, but their citizenship or legal position is in heaven (Philippians 3:20; Ephesians 2:5-6). Christians are in the (evil and antichristian) world, but are not part of this world (John 17:19-20). That (evil and antichristian) world is under the control of the evil one (1 John 5:19). But Christians are born of God and the evil one cannot harm them (1 John 5:18; cf. John 10:28). Christians have part in the “woe to the earth” and equally a part in the “rejoice you heavens” (Revelation 12:12).

The background of the events on this present earth is the triumphant song of Christ (Revelation 12:10-12). All threats, oppression and persecution should no longer cause anxiety and bewilderment or dismay to Christians, but should be viewed against the background of the reality of Christ’s triumph *that is not yet completely realised*. This means that Christians only stand strong and secure in this present history of the world when they see the God’s salvation history behind the history of this world – when they view the reality of Revelation 12:12 (Satan’s fury on earth) in the light of the reality of Revelation 12:10 (God’s salvation, power and kingdom)! Christians who do this do not allow the dragon, his demons and his human political allies to push them aside. Their place in this world is “in Christ” and only there they stand secure (Colossians 3:1-4).

## **4 THE BACKGROUND**

### **a. The Old Testament history of the conflict between Christ and Satan (cf. 12:1-5)**

The Old Testament history of the conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the dragon culminates in the New Testament victory of Christ.

#### **RED THREADS THROUGHOUT THE BIBLE**

Throughout the Bible run several red threads:

- The genealogical line of *the human nature* of the Messiah – his forefathers and himself
- The messianic prophecies – prophesied and fulfilled
- Gods covenant with his people – promised and realised

God reveals himself by speaking and acting within the creation and in human history. God makes *divine history within human history*. God’s history with people does not begin in the New Testament with the first

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<sup>14</sup> cf. Bavinck pp. 45-52

coming of Christ and also not in the Old Testament with Israel. God's history begins in the first chapters of the Bible with the creation, the fall of man into sin and God's promise of salvation that would affect all the nations.

We learn who God is by listening to his speaking and by observing his actions. He reveals himself especially by taking on the human nature and entering his creation and our history in and through Jesus Christ (the Messiah). The Old Testament Hebrew word 'Messiah' and the New Testament Greek word 'Christ' mean 'the Anointed One'.

How does the human line of the coming Messiah-Saviour progress from the first man up to his first coming? The earliest human history describes God's first promise to people.

### GOD'S FIRST PROMISE

The first promise in the Bible is in Genesis 3:15. God says to Satan, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring (Hebrew: seed) and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

When there was no sin on earth, the devil appeared to the first people, Adam and Eve, in the form of a snake. It is clear from the context that a powerful talking demon was hiding behind this snake. This demon is called 'devil' (which means slanderer or accuser), 'Satan' (which means opponent, adversary) and even 'dragon' (Revelation 12:9). He tempted the first man and woman to disobey God's command and they fell from the state of innocence into the state of sin.

God punished them and said that there would be continuous enmity and conflict between the 'offspring' of the devil, that is, the demons and the evil people on earth who take the side of the devil on the one hand, and the 'offspring' (Hebrew: seed)<sup>15</sup> of the woman, that is, Jesus Christ according to his human nature and the people who take the side of God on the other hand. In the future, one of the offspring of the woman would crush the head of the devil, even though the devil would strike his heel and hurt him much. Thus, God turned the disastrous friendship between the first people and the devil into enmity. God spoke of a continuous struggle between the offspring of the devil and the offspring of the woman. And God spoke of the final victory!

In the light of the New Testament revelation, we know that this struggle is ultimately a struggle between the devil (Satan) and Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has come to save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21), but the devil is a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). *Jesus Christ would suffer*, first through his Old Testament people (Israel), then in his own body on the cross and finally through his New Testament people (the Church)(2 Corinthians 1:5; Colossians 1:24; 1 Peter 4:13). But at his first coming, *Jesus Christ bound* Satan. And at his second coming *he will finally crush* Satan by throwing him into the lake of burning sulphur where he will be tormented day and night for ever and ever (20:10). Jesus Christ suffers, but finally conquers!

### THE CONTINUAL ATTEMPT TO HINDER THE FULFILMENT OF GOD'S PROMISE

The conflict raging from Adam to Noah was a part of the conflict between the devil and Christ.

God gave the first promise of salvation (Genesis 3:15) to the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. In the beginning they only had two children, Cain and Abel. Cain became jealous and angry with Abel and murdered him (Genesis 4:1-8). It seemed as if the devil wanted to destroy the descendants of the woman, so that God's promise of salvation would not be fulfilled. However, God gave other children to Adam and Eve, men and women (Genesis 5:1-5). The third son of Adam and Eve, Seth, was predestined to become the bearer of God's promise of salvation (Genesis 5:6-32). The human race continued and thus God's promise of salvation through a person that would be born within the human race was still possible!

After many years, there were many people on earth. The knowledge of the living God, which Adam and Eve had passed on to their descendants, had become so vague that the human race submitted to a complete corrupt life-style. In Genesis 6:1-4 'the sons of God' were the descendants of Seth, the people who followed God and 'the daughters of man' were the descendants of Cain, the people who only followed other humans.

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<sup>15</sup> Hebrew: zera<



The believers began to marry unbelievers (cf. Deuteronomy 7:1-4; 2 Corinthians 6:14). The result was that the wickedness on earth became exceedingly great (Genesis 6:5-7,11-13). So God decided to destroy the whole human race with a flood. Again it seemed as if the devil would triumph and cause the whole human race together with the promise of salvation to be destroyed. However, there was one man on earth who feared God. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time and he walked with God (Genesis 6:8-9). God saved Noah and his family from destruction in the flood (Genesis 6:14 – 8:22; Hebrews 11:7; 1 Peter 3:20). The human race continued and in this way God's promise of salvation through a person that would be born within the human race was still a reality!

**The conflict raging from Noah to Judah was a part of the conflict between the devil and Christ.**

In the twenty-first century B.C., God gave the promise concerning the coming Saviour to Abraham (Abram) and Sarah (Sarai). God promised that their descendants would be as numerous as the stars in heaven and the sand of the sea. And God promised, "Through your offspring (Hebrew: seed)<sup>16</sup> all nations on earth will be blessed" (Genesis 11:26-32; 12:1-3; 15:5; 22:17-18). Humanly speaking, this promise could not be fulfilled, because Abraham and Sarah were old, their bodies were as good as dead and Sarah was barren (Romans 4:19). Again it seemed as if the devil would triumph. However, when Abraham was 100 years old, God miraculously gave Abraham and Sarah a son, called Isaac (Genesis 21:1-7)! The line of God's promise of salvation continued!

The promise concerning the coming Saviour was given to Isaac (Genesis 19:17; 26:4), but also his wife, Rebecca, was barren (Genesis 25:21). Again it seemed as if the devil would triumph. However, Isaac prayed to God and God gave them two children, Esau and Jacob.

The promise concerning the coming Saviour was given to Jacob (Genesis 28:13-14), but his brother Esau wanted to kill him, because Jacob had tricked him out of his right as the first born (Genesis 27:41). Again it seemed as if the devil would triumph by preventing God's promise to go into fulfilment. However, God himself promised to protect Jacob wherever he went (Genesis 28:15). Jacob was not killed and the line of God's promise of salvation continued!

The promise concerning the coming Saviour was then given to Judah, the son of Jacob. The kingship would not depart from the tribe of Judah. The promised Saviour would be a king and all the nations on earth would one day obey him (Genesis 49:10).

**The conflict raging from Judah to Moses was a part of the conflict between the devil and Christ.**

Between the fifteenth and eleventh century B.C. the promise concerning the coming Saviour was carried forward by the descendants of Judah. Because he failed to destroy the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the devil turned his enmity on the Israelites, who were the descendants of Jacob.

In the land of Egypt, the Israelites became a large nation. In Exodus we read how the king of Egypt ordered the killing of all the male babies of the Israelites (Exodus 1:7-22). Again it seemed as if the devil would succeed to destroy 'the seed of the woman'. However, God protected Moses right inside the palace of the Egyptian king and later called Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt to the Promised Land (Exodus 3:1-12).

During the journey through the desert to the Promised Land, the Israelites constantly slipped back into idolatry. They made a golden calf and worshipped it (Exodus 32:1-6). God was angry and wanted to destroy all the Israelites, except Moses (Exodus 32:10). Again it seemed as if the devil would succeed to destroy 'the seed of the woman'. However, Moses interceded with God and pleaded to spare the Israelites. And God heard his prayer. Moses is here a 'type' (illustration) of Jesus Christ, the Greatest Intercessor, who not only prays for us, but also gave his life for us as an atonement sacrifice that takes God's holy and righteous indignation against our sins away (Hebrews 7:25-28)!

**The conflict raging from Moses to David was a part of the conflict between the devil and Christ.**

During the eleventh century B.C., the promise of the coming Saviour, the Messiah King, was given to king David. David was a descendant of the tribe of Judah. In 1 Chronicles 17:11-14 God promised to establish the kingship to one of David's sons. This future king would build 'a house for God' (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:16;

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<sup>16</sup> Hebrew: zera<

Ephesians 2:20-22; 1 Peter 2:4-6,9-10). God would establish his throne forever (cf. Isaiah 9:6; Matthew 12:28; Revelation 17:14; 19:16). And “God would be his father and he would be God’s son” (2 Samuel 7:14; cf. Psalm 2:7; Hebrews 1:5). In Jeremiah 23:5 we read, “The days are coming when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land”. Because God had made these promises to David, the devil tried to destroy David. Twice, king Saul attempted to kill him with a spear, but failed (1 Samuel 18:10-11). Then David’s own son, Absalom, together with a large part of the nation of Israel attempted to kill David, but failed (2 Samuel 15:1 – 19:43). David was not killed. The line of God’s promise of salvation continued!

The conflict raging from David to Ahaz was a part of the conflict between the devil and Christ.

During the tenth century B.C., the promise of the coming Saviour, the Messiah King, was carried forward by the kings of the southern kingdom of Judah. Time and again, the kings of the northern kingdom of Israel (nine and a half tribes) made war against the southern kingdom of Judah (two and a half tribes). Time and again it seemed as if the devil would succeed in his devilish plans to destroy ‘the seed of the woman’. But the Bible teaches us that no one could prevent God from carrying out his plan. Athaliah, the wicked daughter of king Ahab of the northern kingdom of Israel and the mother of the deceased king Ahaziah (2 Kings 8:18,26-27), decided to destroy all the royal princes of the family of king David, because she wanted to have all the power in the kingdom for herself. She had all the princes murdered! It seemed as if the devil had finally succeeded to cut the continuous line of God’s promise of salvation and destroy ‘the seed of the woman’. However, once more, the sovereign God robbed the devil of gaining success. Jehosheba, the granddaughter of king Ahab, stole one of the royal princes away from among the princes. For six years this prince, called Joash, was kept hidden in the temple, until he was made king and Athaliah was killed (2 Kings 11:1-21). If Athaliah had succeeded in the killing of all king David’s descendants, the devil would have triumphed and the promised Saviour would not have been born.

Later, the northern kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Aram (the Syrians) made a plot to destroy the southern kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 16:5). It seemed as if the surrounding nations would destroy the people of God (the people who believed in the LORD) and that the devil would triumph. However, the prophet Isaiah said to king Ahaz, “The LORD himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:1-14). God promised that, whatever the difficult circumstances in history might be, no one would be able to prevent the coming Saviour to come into the world! The coming Saviour would be called ‘Immanuel’, which means ‘God with us’. The nations of Israel and Aram failed to destroy Judah. Thus the devil failed again. The Bible teaches that no evil nation and no leader of any nation could prevent God from carrying out his plan! That was the message of the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 14:24,27) and of the prophet Daniel (Daniel 2:21,44; 4:34-35).

The conflict raging from Ahaz to Esther was a part of the conflict between the devil and Christ.

During the fifth century B.C., the Jews (the descendants of the southern kingdom of Judah) lived everywhere in the Medo-Persian Empire. The wicked Haman hated the Jews (Esther 3:5-6) and had tricked the mighty Persian king Ahasuerus (Xerxes) to sign a royal decree (Esther 3:8-10), which ordered the murder of all the Jews in the empire in one day. Messengers with letters were sent to every province of the Empire, ordering the annihilation of every Jew on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month and to plunder all their possessions (Esther 3:13-14). If Haman would succeed, the devil would triumph and prevent God’s plan of salvation to become a reality. King Ahasuerus heard about the plot from his Jewish queen Esther. He had Haman hanged and issued another royal decree that the Jews in his empire may defend themselves against any armed force that might attack them (Esther 8:7-11). God prevented this catastrophe and the devil could not and did not triumph!

The conflict raging from Esther to Bethlehem was a part of the conflict between the devil and Christ.

Finally the promise of the coming Saviour, the Messiah King, was given to the virgin Mary. God sent the angel Gabriël to her and said. “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, meaning ‘Saviour’ (Matthew 1: 21). He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.” (Luke 1:30-33).

When finally the time arrived for the coming Saviour of the world to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), the devil made one final attempt to prevent this from happening. The wicked Roman king Herod was afraid when he heard from the wise men from the East that the coming Saviour and King had been born. He thought that the Saviour would threaten his earthly kingdom and so he ordered the murder of all male babies under the age of two years in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1-18). Again it seemed as if the devil would triumph. But God's eternal purpose cannot be frustrated and was not frustrated! In the night, an angel came to Joseph and told him to flee to Egypt with Mary and the child. They stayed in Egypt until Herod had died.

In this conflict between the devil and Christ throughout the ages, it was Jesus Christ who triumphed! This conflict between the devil and Christ throughout the Old Testament period is described in Revelation 12:1-5. "The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne." 'The woman' is a symbol for God's people during the Old Testament period. The promised Saviour would be born among them (cf. John 4:22). 'The dragon' is a symbol for the devil. And 'the male child' is a symbol for the Messiah, Jesus Christ. *Throughout the whole history of the Old Testament period*, the devil had attempted to hinder the birth of the promised coming Saviour! Nevertheless, the sovereign God saw to it that his plan of salvation would not fail and did not fail!

#### The conflict between the devil and Christ continued to rage throughout his life on earth.

Satan was defeated. When his ministry to save people on earth began, the devil again attempted to subject Jesus Christ to himself by tempting him severely. First, the devil tempted Jesus *to distrust God and to become independent from God*. He attempted to destroy Jesus' confidence in God the Father to sustain him (Matthew 4:1-4). Then the devil tempted Jesus *to have a false trust in God the Father and trust a promise in the Bible that was twisted out of context*. By quoting God's own words out of context (Matthew 4:5-7), he attempted to convince Jesus to do what that passage in the Bible said. Finally, the devil tempted Jesus *to obtain the crown over all the kingdoms on earth without enduring the cross*. He attempted to lure Jesus with quick material results to subject himself to the devil (Matthew 4:8-11). However, Jesus Christ overcame every temptation of the devil and unmasked the devil as a liar (John 8:44).

Satan was bound. Jesus Christ *once for all time* bound the strong man (Satan). Throughout his ministry on earth Jesus Christ cast the fallen angels of the devil (demons) out of people, robbed the strong man from his possessions (people) and thereby *once for all time* established the kingdom of God (the sovereign rule of God) on earth (Matthew 12:28-29)<sup>17</sup>. Jesus Christ had come into the world to destroy *once for all time* the works of the devil (1 John 3:8)<sup>18</sup>. By his death, Jesus Christ *once for all time* disarmed the devil and his demons, made a public spectacle of them and triumphed over them (Colossians 2:15)<sup>19</sup>; he *once for all time* destroyed (to render inoperative, to render ineffective, to nullify) the devil that holds the power of death (Hebrews 2:14-15)<sup>20</sup>. By *once for all time* 'being lifted up from the earth' (the summary symbol of his death on the cross, resurrection, ascension and enthronement in heaven), Jesus Christ *with certainty* drives the devil out of his arrogantly claimed position as 'prince of this world'<sup>21</sup>. From his death and resurrection onwards, Jesus Christ *with certainty* draws people from every nation in the world to himself (John 12:31-32).<sup>22</sup> By the preaching of the gospel, people are *once for all time* robbed out of the domain of the devil and *once for all time* brought into the kingdom of Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:13)<sup>23</sup>. In this way, the promise, which God made in Genesis 3:15, came to be fulfilled. Jesus Christ, 'the seed of the woman' and 'the seed of Abraham' (Genesis 22:18) crushed the head of the devil! From the first coming of Jesus Christ onwards, Jesus Christ rules over all the powers and authorities on earth (Ephesians 1:20-22; 1 Peter 3:22)! From the

<sup>17</sup> ει δε εν πνευματι θεου εγω εκβαλλω (vira--1s) τα δαιμονια, αρα εφθασεν < φθανω (viaa--3s) εφ υμας η βασιλεια του θεου.

η πως δυναται (virm) τις εισελθειν (vnaa) εις την οικιαν του ισχυρου και τα σκευη αυτου αρπασαι > αρπαζω (vnaa),  
εαν μη πρωτον δηση < δεω (vsaa--3s) τον ισχυρον; και τοτε την οικιαν αυτου διαρπασει (vifa--3s)

<sup>18</sup> εις τουτο εφανερωθη (viar) ο υιος του θεου, ινα λυση (vsaa) τα εργα του διαβολου

<sup>19</sup> απεκδυσαμενος > απεκδυομαι (to strip, disarm)(vram) τας αρχας και τας εξουσιας εδειγματισεν > δεικματιζω (to display)(viaa)  
εν παρρησια (openly) θριαμβευσας > θριαμβευω (to lead in triumph)(vraa) αυτους εν αυτω (by himself = by his cross)

<sup>20</sup> ινα του θανατου καταργηση > καταργεω (vsaa) τον το κρατος εχοντα (vrpa) του θανατου

<sup>21</sup> νυν κρισις εστιν του κοσμου τουτου, νυν ο αρχων του κοσμου τουτου εκβληθησεται > εκβαλλω (vifr, expressing absolute certainty)  
εξω

<sup>22</sup> καγω, εαν υψωθω > υψωω (vsap, expressing once for all time) εκ της γης, παντας ελκυσω > ελκυω (to draw)(vifa, expressing absolute certainty) προς εμαυτον

<sup>23</sup> ος ερρυσατο > ρυομαι (to deliver)(viam) ημας εκ της εξουσιας του σκοτους και μετεστησεν > μετιστημι (to transfer)(viaa)  
εις την βασιλειαν του υιου της αγαπης αυτου

first coming of Jesus Christ onwards, no one can stop him from drawing people of every nation on earth to himself! That is what is meant by the words, “to keep Satan from deceiving the nations anymore” (20:3). *The Bible teaches us that no one can prevent God from carrying out his eternal plan!*

### **b. The Old Testament exodus as typology (cf. 12:6,14)**

The Old Testament exodus of Israel serves as an illustration of the New Testament salvation. “The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert” (12:6,14). The picture is expressed in terms of Israel’s exodus from Egypt and sojourn in the wilderness (Exodus 15:22). This picture is an Old Testament type (a historic event that serves as an illustration) of the New Testament Church in its journey to the heavenly Canaan.

In the New Testament Christian salvation is treated as a new exodus. The exodus typology is particularly pervasive in the New Testament.

The exodus. Matthew seems to view the infancy of Jesus as a recapitulation of the early experiences of Israel, which went down to Egypt and came up again (Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:15).

The Passover. John speaks of Christ as the antitypical Passover lamb, even in the chronology of events (Exodus 12:3-6; John 1:29; 19:14,36). Peter says we have been redeemed ... by the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect (Exodus 12:5; 1 Peter 1:19). Paul says that Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

The crossing of the Red Sea. As the Israelites passed through the Red Sea, so Christians have been baptised into Christ (Exodus 14:22,29; 1 Corinthians 10:1-2).

The bread and the water in the desert. As the Israelites received bread from heaven and water from the rock, so Christians receive their distinctive supernatural food and drink (Exodus 17:6; 1 Corinthians 10:3-4).

The failure by unbelief to enter. As the Exodus generation despite all these blessings died in the wilderness because of unbelief and disobedience and so failed to enter the promised land, Christians for their part are exhorted to take warnings lest they fall (Numbers 14:29-30; 1 Corinthians 10:5-12; cf. Hebrews 3:7-4:13; Jude 5). For these things have become ‘examples or types’<sup>24</sup> of us, in order not to desire the evil things they desired (1 Corinthians 10:6). Or these things ‘as example or typically’<sup>25</sup> happened to the Israelites, and was written down for the ‘warning or admonition or instruction’ of us on whom the end of the ages has arrived (1 Corinthians 10:11)<sup>26</sup>. This typology has an intensely ethical and advising or recommending emphasis. Nevertheless, the one who trusts in God will never be put to shame (Isaiah 28:16; 1 Peter 2:6-8).

The God who carries his people. An eagle carries its young on its wings or hovers over its young ready to catch them when they fall (Deuteronomy 32:10-13). As God himself carried his Old Testament people (the Israelites) out of danger in Egypt and throughout the desert period to himself (Exodus 19:4; Deuteronomy 1:29-33; cf. Psalm 28:9; Isaiah 40:31), so God carries his New Testament people (the Church) safely throughout the New Testament period of persecution (12:14). God gives his people the two wings of the eagle to fly. The idea is not that the Church flies without God’s help, but rather that the Church is completely dependent on the wings God provides (cf. John 15:5)!

### **c. The Old Testament typology (cf. 12:15-16)**

The Old Testament typology finds its final expression in the New Testament salvation. The Old Testament chaotic and threatening waters (flood, Red Sea and Tigris and Euphrates Rivers) serve as types of the New Testament salvation.

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<sup>24</sup> τυποι

<sup>25</sup> τυπικως

<sup>26</sup> εγραφη (vira) δε προς νουθεσιαν ημων, εις ους τα τελη των αιωνων κατηνητηκεν > κατανταω (to arrive, to come to)(vira)

The dragon is pictured in Old Testament symbols as a great sea monster, called Leviathan or Rahab (Isaiah 27:1; 51:9-10; Psalm 74:13-15), that spews water (cf. Isaiah 59:19; Jeremiah 46:7-8).

A 'type or image' consists of a person, thing or event in history that serves as an illustration. Especially the ceremonial Law of the Old Testament relates to its fulfilment in the New Testament as 'a type (picture, representation, copy)' of 'the real thing' (Hebrews 8:5) and as 'the shadow' of 'the reality itself' (Hebrews 10:1).

A 'type'<sup>27</sup> is literally 'an imprint of a stamp'. In the Bible a type is to explain the biblical history of salvation in such a way that some (not all) earlier phases of salvation are seen as an illustration of the later phases of salvation, or that *a later phase of salvation is seen as the fulfilment of an earlier phase of salvation*. The various phases of God's salvation history show a repetition of the pattern of God's acts in creation, in salvation and in restoration.

The New Testament reveals *God's final and complete recreating, saving and restoring acts* in and through Jesus Christ and his New Testament people, the Church.

There are especially three events in the Old Testament that must be regarded and treated as 'types': the Creation, the Exodus and the Return from Exile. The Exodus is seen as a new creation. The restoration of Israel from their Exile to Babylon is seen as a new creation and a new exodus!

Although typology occurs in the Bible, we may not begin to explain the whole Bible as a book of types and antitypes! Only when the inspired authors of the books in the Bible depict a particular person, thing or event as 'a type', may we also regard it as 'a type'.

(1) The first type in the Old Testament is in the creation out of the flood waters.

During the creation God put the turbulent sea under restraint within boundaries (Genesis 1:9-10; Job 38:8-11). This act of creation is also depicted in figurative language, that is, in *the types of Rahab and Leviathan*. During the creation God overpowered Rahab and Leviathan (Job 26:12-13). 'Rahab' is a mythical sea monster, a dragon, a symbolical depiction of a hostile power that thrashes about recklessly. Quietening the unruly sea flood at the creation is poetically depicted as 'God cutting Rahab to pieces' (Job 26:12; cf. 38:8-11), or as 'God crushing Rahab like one of the slain' (Psalm 89:9-11) or as 'God piercing that monster (Rahab) through' (Isaiah 51:9). 'Leviathan' is also a mythical sea monster or snake of some kind (Psalm 104:26), or a crocodile (Job 40:21 - 41:34), another symbolical depiction of the power of chaos when the earth was still formless and empty (Genesis 1:1-2).

(2) The second type in the Bible is in the exodus through the waters of the Red Sea.

The exodus from the house of slavery in Egypt is depicted as *a new creation*, a repetition of the original creative act of God, a new victory of God over his enemies (and chaos). During the exodus God overpowered the water of the Red Sea and turned it into dry land (Exodus 14:21-31). This is depicted poetically as a victory over Rahab (Isaiah 51:9-10) and Leviathan (Psalm 74:12-14).

(3) The third type in the Bible is in the return from exile through the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates.

The return from exile is depicted as *a new creation and a new exodus*. It is depicted as *a new creation*, a repetition of the original creative act of God. The exiled people were created, formed and made for God's glory (Isaiah 43:5-7). It is also depicted as *a new exodus*, a repetition of the saving act of God. The dragon and snake typology are not only employed at the exodus, but also at the return from exile. God is urged to repeat his mighty deeds during the creation and during the exodus by the return of the exiles from Babylon (Isaiah 51:9-11). During the exodus God made a road in the depths of the sea (the Red Sea), which is also called 'the great deep', 'the monster Rahab'. And during the return from exile God would again do this, when the exiles must cross the mighty River Tigris and River Euphrates and trek through the desert (Isaiah 43:2,16,19).

The great empire of Assyria to which the northern kingdom of Israel was taken in exile is poetically depicted as 'the Leviathan, the gliding serpent' (the River Tigris). Her attacks are symbolised by the "mighty floodwaters of the River Tigris that overflows all its channels, run over all its banks and sweep on into Judah, swirling over it, passing through it and reaching up to the neck" (Isaiah 8:7-8). And the great empire of

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<sup>27</sup> Greek: τυπος

Babylon to which the southern kingdom of Judah was taken in exile is poetically depicted as 'de Leviathan, the coiling serpent' (the River Euphrates). These hostile empires are depicted as 'the great monster of the sea' (Isaiah 27:1).

The Old Testament types find their final expression in the New Testament salvation.

The successive periods of God's salvation history shows a recurrent pattern of divine action. *The authors of the New Testament revelation believed that these recurrent divine acts of salvation in history find their final expression in the New Testament period when God saves his people in and through Jesus Christ.*

- The Christian salvation is depicted as *a new creation*. The ultimate creation is regeneration. (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15).
- The Christian salvation is depicted as *a new exodus*. The ultimate Passover lamb is Christ. (1 Corinthians 5:7-8; 1 Corinthians 10:1-4).
- The Christian salvation is depicted as *a new return from exile*. The ultimate way of return through the desert is the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 1:1-5).

Revelation 12:14 is a symbol of Christian salvation in which God cares for his people in the desert. And Revelation 12:15-16 is a symbol of Christian salvation in which God leads his people safely through the mighty floodwaters that threatens to sweep them away.