

Humans seem to love a good conspiracy theory. We have a local one in the town where I live. We often see big black helicopters in our area. Word is that they are escorting cloaked UFOs to a secret base in the wilderness. Did you know that the contrails you see in the sky are actually the government testing certain calming chemicals on us? And of course your vote doesn't really matter because the Illuminati control the elections and put whoever will make them wealthier in power. And more lately there is the one about Geitner and the G-8 planning on a world currency that will eventually end up as the mark of the Beast. Well, that last one might not be so far fetched. But there is one conspiracy the Bible affirms to be true. It is as old as the planet and it is the topic of our text for today.

Right in the middle of the book of Revelation, the lens pulls back from the first three and half years into the tribulation and gives us a picture from God's eternal perspective. This passage shows us the forest as opposed to the trees. This is about the great war that started when man was created. God told Adam and Eve about it just after the fall, Genesis 3:15. *15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.* (NIV) "You" in the passage is the serpent that misled Eve with his lies and brought about the fall of man.

We find the serpent's intentions in a passage that was about the king of Babylon. As Isaiah's prophecy goes on, it seems to shift from the king to someone who motivated the king, someone more powerful than any man with ambitions beyond those of mortal man. (Isaiah 14:12-14) He is called the "morning star" which the KJV translates it as "Lucifer". His intentions are to displace God and reign as the supreme power. Unable to attack God directly, he attacks those that God loves. He attacks Israel and the church. He attacks them through others and with accusations. That is why he is also known as the Accuser or Satan. (Revelation 12:10)

The vision opens with a great sign, the first mentioned in this book. *1 A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head.* Who is the woman? Some suggest Israel citing the fact that this passage is so similar to Joseph's dream in which Jacob was the sun, Rachael the moon, and his brothers the eleven stars. (Genesis 37:9-10) But this woman is clothed with the sun. She is not the moon, but the moon in under her feet. Since the moon is said to rule the night and the hours of darkness were considered a time for evildoers, (Genesis 1:16; 1Thessalonians 5:7) the moon could be said to be a false light. It sounds to me more like the ancient Genesis passage in which the seed of the woman crushes the head of the serpent. Paul the Apostle promised that God would soon crush Satan under our feet. (Romans 16:20)

In that ancient Genesis passage, the woman was Eve. Eve could not be called Jewish, for she was before Abraham. She was the mother of all living, but she was one who placed her faith in God. Like Eve before her, Mary trusted God to provide for her sins. She submitted herself to God. So is the woman Mary?

Commented [notes1]: 12 How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!

13 You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain.

14 I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."
Isaiah 14:12-14 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.
Rev 12:10 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 9 Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

10 When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?"
Gen 37:9-10 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: 16 God made two great lights--the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars.
Gen 1:16 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night.
1 Thess 5:7 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: 20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.
Romans 16:20 (NIV)

Some suggest that the woman is the church. In the next verses we see she gives birth to the Savior. The church wasn't around to give birth to the Savior. I think we can only understand who the woman is in context with the ancient prophecy when we see her as representing the people of believing faith, Jew and Gentile, people that were looking toward the cross, God's provision. The Sun is the righteousness they have by believing faith. (Isaiah 61:10) The moon under her feet represents the victory over Satan. The twelve stars are the twelve tribes of Israel, the people of the first covenants, through whom God was doing His work up until the birth of Messiah.

Commented [notes7]: 10 I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. Isaiah 61:10 (NIV)

² *She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.* The One promised so long ago was about to appear, the One who would crush the head of the serpent. Isaiah prophesied that to us a child would be born, to us a son would be given... and He shall be called... Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)

Commented [notes8]: 6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6 (NIV)

Certainly the people of God at the beginning of the first century were crying out. The time had come. The world was pregnant with anticipation. (Romans 5:6) Even non-Jewish writings predicted the time had come for a great deliver in Israel. The world was ready. Greek and Roman mythology had left people empty and hungry for truth. Pantheism was not meeting the spiritual needs of the world. Roman roads and the peace Rome brought made it possible for a quick dispersion of truth when it arrived. The appointed time had come.

Commented [notes9]: 6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Romans 5:6 (NIV)

³ *Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads.* Another wondrous sign! This time it's an evil one. The description reminds us of the prophet Daniel's visions of the end-time nations. He described ten powers and how three are plucked up by the anti-Christ. (Daniel 7:8) Though that description takes place in the last days, the power that indwells the anti-Christ showed up around the time of Jesus' birth. Verse 9 tells us that this dragon is Satan, the Devil. Most people today do not believe Satan is a real being, but Jesus certainly believed that he and his forces are real. (Matthew 25:41) Our passage today describes him as very real and very powerful.

Commented [notes10]: 8 "While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully. Dan 7:8 (NIV)

Those who are involved in the New Age Movement claim that Satan and Lucifer are not the same entity. They claim that Lucifer is the light of the world and a good angel. He is not Satan. New Agers claim that Satan is a figment of the Christian's imagination. They claim that Lucifer is the hope of the world. Mattoon's Treasures - Treasures from Revelation. One of us is dreadfully wrong!

Commented [notes11]: 41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Matt 25:41 (NIV)

⁴ *His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. 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.* The stars are the angels that joined Satan in his rebellion. One third of the hosts of heaven followed. He has quite an army, though some are already bound. (Jude 6,13; 2Peter 2:4) The rest are here in the earth serving their master.

Commented [notes12]: 6 And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home--these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. Jude 1:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 13 They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever. Jude 1:13 (NIV)

The dragon was ready to devour the child when he was born. The dragon does not know when the Promised One would come, but Satan knew this coming One will crush

Commented [notes14]: 4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; 2 Peter 2:4 (NIV)

his head. He stood waiting, plotting, and scheming. You'll notice that the physical lineage of the Messiah had key women (Sarah and Rebekah) who were barren. (Genesis 11:30; 25:21) You'll also notice the constant temptation to go another direction than the line of the promised lineage (Ishmael and Absalom – Genesis 17:18; 2Samuel 15:10). There were several attempts to kill every male child in the line. Satan was busy throughout the ages trying to prevent God from bringing the prophecy to fulfillment.

Herod was eager to send out his soldiers and slaughter every young baby boy. (Matthew 2:16) Once He was born, Satan did not give up. He tried to take His life on the lake when a storm came up and threatened to sink the disciples' ship. (Matthew 8:25) He tried to get Jesus to jump off the pinnacle of the Temple. (Matthew 4:6) He tried to incite the people of Nazareth and the religious leaders to kill Him. (Luke 4:29; John 19:32) Finally he tried to end Jesus' life on the cross. Satan always stands ready to devour. It happened throughout Jesus' life, but it happens to those who receive Jesus as well. He is a roaring lion searching for those he may devour. (1Peter 5:8) It is a war!

Satan knows that he is doomed. He will do everything he can to lash back at the One he hates. If he could have stopped Jesus from redeeming our souls, he would have been thrilled. But his rage actually ended up bringing about the sacrifice for our sins. He is as enraged today as ever. He doesn't want you to know Christ or serve Him. He wants to destroy you because that is how he gets back at God. Do you see the age-old conspiracy, the real conspiracy? He wants to deceive you because he hates God. He wants to lead you down a path to destruction and keep you thinking it's enjoyable. He'd rather you were bird food at Armageddon than guests at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. God wants your soul because He loves you. This is real. It's not someone's imagination. It's a war with eternal consequences. To Satan, you are just a pawn to get at God. To God, you are a precious soul with whom He wants to spend eternity. (John 10:28)

Satan will try to defeat God's goal of making you His son or daughter. He tries different lures to distract you from seeing his conspiracy. His favorite lure is pride. He tells you that you are smarter than God and don't have to believe God's word, or that you can reinterpret it. (Genesis 3:1) He tries the pleasures of life, the love of money, lust, anything God has created that he can turn into a false promise of lasting satisfaction. (John 2:15-17) He has attached barbed hooks on those lures. Once you bite, you have a hard time getting unhooked. He is fishing for souls because he wants to catch them before God does.

It always surprises me when I catch several fish from the same spot on the same lure. You can see them all look at the lure and then there goes one, we'll call him Joe. The other fish see Joe dragged out of the water on that lure. You throw the same lure back in and you'd think they would say, "Hey, don't go near that one. Didn't you see what happened to Joe!" But no, Sam goes after it with gusto and bites it and is dragged out of the water. I'll use the same lure until they quit chasing it, but even then if I can get it right in front of their nose, they'll still bite.

Commented [notes15]: 30 Now Sarai was barren; she had no children.
Gen 11:30 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: 21 Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant.
Gen 25:21 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: 18 And Abraham said to God, "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!"
Gen 17:18 (NIV)

Commented [notes18]: 10 Then Absalom sent secret messengers throughout the tribes of Israel to say, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpets, then say, 'Absalom is king in Hebron.'"
2 Sam 15:10 (NIV)

Commented [notes19]: 16 When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.
Matt 2:16 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 25 The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"
Matt 8:25 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: ""He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." "
Matt 4:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: 29 They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff.
Luke 4:29 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: 32 but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?"
John 10:32 (NIV)

Commented [notes24]: 8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.
1 Peter 5:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes25]: 28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.
John 10:28 (NIV)

Commented [notes26]: 1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"
Gen 3:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes27]: 15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

... [1]

Have you seen those people who chase after money dragged out of the water? You know what I mean. Have you seen those guys that were sure that another woman would make them happy? There goes the same lure through the water and the same fish bites those barbed hooks again. What are you going to do? Don't think just because God made Satan practice catch and release on some that He'll make him do it with you.

⁵ *She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.* This identifies the child as Jesus. [Psalm 2](#) tells us that the One that will rule with a rod of iron is the Son of God. Through the line of Abraham, Judah, and David came this One that will inherit David's throne and reign forever. Satan is defeated. His head is crushed. The kingdom has come and that is a great comfort to all who understand the implications.

Sin, death, and destruction are all the working of Satan. Imagine this world under the reign of Christ without the influence of Satan. We could shut down the jails. Get rid of all weapons, as there is no use for them. [\(Micah 4:3\)](#) Harmony and peace will prevail. True security and true pleasure will be the norm. The iron scepter of the Lord will quickly bring justice to those who act without consideration of others. [\(Zechariah 14:17\)](#) Come quickly Lord Jesus! [\(Revelation 22:20\)](#)

Jesus declared to His accusers that they would see Him seated at the right hand of God. [\(Luke 22:69\)](#) Eyewitnesses told of His ascension 40 days after His resurrection. [\(Acts 1:9-11\)](#) Once our salvation was secured and the disciples instructed, Jesus was in fact snatched up to God and to His throne where He intercedes for us until the time of His return.

⁶ *The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.* There is a great deal of differing interpretations about the last days. The subject of the rapture and its timing in the last 7 years has brought much division. To belong to certain religious affiliations, you must hold to their interpretation of when they believe the rapture takes place. I don't want to wade into that here. It really doesn't matter that much to me. At one time it did, but a dear missionary asked me if it made any difference in the way I lived today. I realized that emphasizing that debatable conviction was only a distraction from focusing on doing God's will today.

The lens of Scripture is focusing in again on the details of the coming end-time days. The point the text is making is that God will provide for believers be they Messianic Jews or Gentiles or both. In this great battle for the souls of men, He'll give you grace to die as a martyr or provide a refuge to protect you. If God cares for the sparrow that falls, He is certainly looking after His children, just as He looked after the life of His Son during all of Satan's attacks on Him while He walked this earth. [\(Luke 12:24; Matthew 10:29\)](#)

That desert to which the woman flees is meant to remind us of the way God provided for the children of God in the Exodus. It is a place filled with the manifest presence of Jesus. The cloud covered them from the heat of the sun and became a pillar of fire to light the camp at night. It/He even protected them from the ensuing Egyptians.

Commented [notes28]: 9 You will rule them with an iron scepter ; you will dash them to pieces like pottery." Psalms 2:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes29]: 3 He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Micah 4:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes30]: 17 If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, they will have no rain. Zech 14:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes31]: 20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. Rev 22:20 (NIV)

Commented [notes32]: 69 But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God." Luke 22:69 (NIV)

Commented [notes33]: 9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.
10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.
11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:9-11 (NIV)

Commented [notes34]: 24 Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Luke 12:24 (NIV)

Commented [notes35]: 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny ? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. Matt 10:29 (NIV)

(Exodus 13:21) The rock from which the rivers of water flowed to quench their thirst was none other than Christ, who while in the temple cried out, "If anyone is thirsty let Him come to me and drink." (1Corinthians 10:4; John 7:37) He was also the manna that nourished them faithfully each day, a picture of the true bread from heaven. (John 6:32) The place of refuge we have in Christ is filled with the provision of Himself. (Philippians 4:19)

The word "place" (*topos* in LXX) was used by Daniel to refer to the Sanctuary. John may be telling us that in fleeing from the persecution of this world, Jesus will be manifestly with us as we gather in the sanctuary, the body of Christ. That is where Jesus will meet our needs. It was true as the first readers fled the persecution of Emperor Domitian. It has been true in church history, including our day, and perhaps it will be ultimately true in the middle of the last week of Daniel, the middle of the Great Tribulation.

The vision has obviously been filled with symbolism to this point. The fact that they were called signs shows that the pictures are symbolical. The passage now turns to specifics. As we continue with the context of the passage, the war of Satan against the people of the earth continues and intensifies. I believe the time given is half of the last seven years. The people of God will flee for 3½ years and be kept from the clutches of evil. This is commonly interpreted as the Messianic Jews fleeing to Petra and the surrounding region. When we see how wrong the Jews were about Jesus' first coming, I hesitate to make hard and fast conclusions about His Second Coming. (Daniel 12:4)

What have we learned today from John's vision of the great cosmic conspiracy to deceive and destroy mankind? As my brother David likes to say, "God is large and in charge!" God has, from the very beginning, had a plan to redeem and save us. He is fishing for us as well, but His lure is love. (Song of Songs 2:4) It's His love displayed on the cross. (John 12:32) The goodness of God leads to repentance. (Romans 2:4) He wants to wash us clean of our sinful past and make us children of God. He wants to spend eternity with us, but He has an enemy, an enemy that provides us with an alternative. That enemy is fishing for us as well. He stands now before the woman and attempts to devour any soul that will bite his lures. He is powerful and desperately wants to bring misery into your life. It's his way of getting back at God. But God will give you the grace to resist Satan's lures and see you through to the end if you will keep your eyes on Him. He will give you the grace to endure, and bring you to a place prepared for you that is filled with His presence. (1Corinthians 1:8)

Ultimately, all who trust in Him will go to the place He has prepared for us. He said, "*I am going to prepare a place for you, and if I go, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may also be.*" (John 14:3) What a wonder! The Creator wants to spend eternity with us, to be our provision forever!

So what do we do about this vision? This is one conspiracy you can tell others about that is absolutely true. Recognize the lures for what they are as they pass your way. Point them out to others. Warn them of where biting that lure will land you. But most of all point them to the love lure and the plans that God has for us. Point them to the place He has prepared for us but most of all point them to the One that prepared it.

Commented [notes36]: 21 By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Ex 13:21 (NIV)

Commented [notes37]: 4 and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. 1 Cor 10:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes38]: 37 On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. John 7:37 (NIV)

Commented [notes39]: 32 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. John 6:32 (NIV)

Commented [notes40]: 19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Phil 4:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes41]: 4 But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge." Dan 12:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes42]: He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love. Song 2:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes43]: 32 But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." John 12:32 (NIV)

Commented [notes44]: 4 Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? Romans 2:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes45]: 8 He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Cor 1:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes46]: 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. John 14:3 (NIV)

15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world.

17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

1 John 2:15-17 (NIV)