

Revelation 12:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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:

Analysis

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:... This verse from Revelation's vision of woman, child, and dragon - cosmic conflict, satan's defeat, messiah's victory employs apocalyptic imagery rich with Old Testament allusions and symbolic meaning. The Greek text uses vivid apocalyptic language characteristic of Jewish prophetic literature, drawing heavily from Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Zechariah.

The symbolism must be interpreted within its first-century context while recognizing timeless spiritual realities. The imagery would resonate powerfully with persecuted believers facing Roman imperial cult worship, providing hope that despite present suffering, Christ reigns sovereign and will consummate His kingdom. The apocalyptic genre uses symbolic numbers (seven, twelve, 144,000), colors, beasts, and cosmic imagery to convey theological truth rather than photographic descriptions.

Christologically, Revelation consistently exalts Jesus as the victorious Lamb, the faithful witness, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Every vision ultimately points to Christ's supremacy, His finished redemptive work, and His certain return to judge the living and dead and establish the new creation.

Historical Context

John received this revelation circa AD 95 during Domitian's persecution, exiled on Patmos for his testimony. The seven churches of Asia Minor faced increasing pressure to participate in emperor worship and pagan religious practices. Refusal meant economic hardship, social ostracism, and potential martyrdom. Understanding this context illuminates Revelation's encouragement to faithful endurance.

The apocalyptic genre was familiar to first-century Jewish and Christian readers. Rather than newspaper-style predictions, apocalyptic literature uses symbolic imagery to reveal spiritual realities behind earthly events, encourage the faithful, warn the unfaithful, and assert God's ultimate sovereignty over history. Parallels with Daniel, Ezekiel, and intertestamental apocalyptic writings would help original readers decode the symbols.

Rome's imperial cult demanded worship of Caesar as divine, placing Christians in impossible situations—compromise their faith or face persecution. Revelation identifies Rome as "Babylon" and assures believers that despite appearances, the Lamb conquered through His death and resurrection, and all earthly kingdoms will submit to His reign.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 12:1 reveal God's character, particularly His sovereignty, holiness, and justice?
2. What specific encouragement or warning does this verse offer for maintaining faithful Christian witness amid cultural pressure?

3. How does this passage point to Christ's victory and the hope of new creation, and how should that shape your present priorities?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	σημεῖον	μέγα	ὥφθη	ἐν	τῷ	οὐρανῷ	γυνή
And	wonder	a great	there appeared	in	^{G3588}	heaven	a woman
G2532	G4592	G3173	G3700	G1722		G3772	G1135
περιβεβλημένη	τὸν	ἥλιον	καὶ	ἡ	σελήνη	ὑποκάτω	
clothed	^{G3588}	with the sun	And	^{G3588}	the moon	under	
G4016		G2246	G2532		G4582	G5270	
τῶν	ποδῶν	αὐτῆς	καὶ	ἐπὶ	τῆς	κεφαλῆς	αὐτῆς
^{G3588}	feet	her	And	upon	^{G3588}	head	her
	G4228	G846	G2532	G1909		G2776	G846
στέφανος	ἀστέρων	δώδεκα					
a crown	stars	of twelve					
G4735	G792	G1427					

Additional Cross-References

Luke 21:25 (Parallel theme): And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

Ephesians 5:32 (Parallel theme): This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Mark 13:25 (Parallel theme): And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.

Isaiah 62:3 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.

Song of Solomon 6:10: Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?

Luke 21:11 (Parallel theme): And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

Psalms 84:11 (Parallel theme): For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

Psalms 104:2 (Parallel theme): Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:

2 Chronicles 32:31 (Parallel theme): Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.

Revelation 21:23 (Parallel theme): And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.