

THE BIRTH OF THE NEW CHURCH

Lesson: Revelation 12:1

“Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars” (Revelation 12:1).

This beautiful woman was a living picture of the Lord's New Church. John, the Lord's beloved disciple, was shown this picture in the other world. John was on the Isle of Patmos when the Lord opened his spiritual eyes and showed him many pictures in the other world. We love to look at and think about this picture because it stands for the New Church, and the Nineteenth Day of June is the birthday of the New Church.

The beautiful woman appeared in heaven, and the Lord's New Church came down out of heaven. What John saw was truly a great wonder, because the woman was not only beautiful she was clothed with the sun. Her garments were shining brightly like the dancing rays of the sun. The sun was all around her, and yet she was safe within the sun. Under her feet was the moon. On her head there was a crown of twelve stars. The moon and the stars also shone brightly from the fire and gleaming light of the sun.

In the other world there can be such living pictures. The angels love to see them and even to make them. Angels are taught many things in this way. John also was taught many things in this way so that he could write about them. From what he wrote, people could learn about the wonders of heaven.

The Lord's Word is also like a sun. Just as heat and light come to us from the natural sun which we see in the daytime, so all love and truth come from the Lord's Word which is the sun of heaven. And because the Lord makes His Church with the angels and also with people from the love and truth of His Word, so John saw the New Church which the Lord was going to make some day as "a woman clothed with the sun."

This beautiful woman, who was clothed with the sun, was going to have a very special baby boy. A new baby is always a wonderfully happy thing, isn't it? The woman was happy she was going to have a baby son. But there was a great danger that John saw in the spiritual world. He saw a great red dragon who had seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns. This terrible dragon was just waiting to eat up the baby as soon as it was born. But of course the Lord protected the baby boy. As soon as he was born, he was caught up into heaven to be safe with the Lord.

The dragon was so angry about this that he began to fight and start a war in heaven. But the angels won the war, and the wicked dragon was chased out of heaven and cast down to the earth. He was still filled with anger and hate though, and he tried to make trouble for the woman who was clothed with the sun. But she was given two wings like those of a big eagle, and she flew into the wilderness where she would be safe. But still the dragon didn't give up. He sent a big flood of water out of his mouth to try to drown the woman. But the earth helped the woman. The earth swallowed up the flood of water so that it did not harm the woman. She was safe.

This vision of John contains many important truths. Each thing he saw stands for something special. The woman clothed with the sun represents the Lord's New Church. This New Church is surrounded by the Lord's warm love and His bright wisdom, just as the woman John saw was clothed with the sun. Remember, the moon was under the feet of the woman and she had a crown of twelve stars upon her head. This means that the New Church is to have a true faith and trust in the Lord (moon), and from this real wisdom and intelligence about heavenly things (stars).

The baby boy means the wonderful doctrines or teachings of the New Church. As some of you probably know, these teachings were given to the New Church in the Heavenly Doctrines through Emanuel Swedenborg long after John had his vision. So you can see that John's vision was really a prophecy—a promise—of what would happen later on. These teachings of the New Church are greatly needed in this troubled world, for they are from the Lord, and the Lord knows what truths are needed to overcome disorder. But evil spirits and all the forces of hell hate these new teachings given to the New Church because they help us to overcome evil. This is what is meant by the hideous red dragon which was waiting to destroy the baby boy when he was born.

But the Lord and His angels protect the doctrines of the New Church so that they won't be destroyed by evil—by the dragon. We can certainly see that this is true. There is a great deal of evil in the world, but this evil has not been able to destroy the teachings of the New Church. People are free to learn about them and to love them and to try to live according to them. The male child of John's prophecy has been kept safe. And the New Church has been kept safe, also. It is slowly growing and getting stronger and better known in the world. The Lord has our beloved Church in His care and He will cause it to spread from the few to the many. We can help in this, the Lord's work. For if we all do our best to learn the teachings of the New Church, and then try to really live them and love them then the New Church will indeed grow and prosper. The new age of love and truth and peace will begin. *Amen.*