

**"A crown of twelve stars"**—twelve leaders were prominent in the Old Testament Church—the twelve sons of Jacob; and in the New Testament Church—the twelve Apostles.

**Expecting the birth of a man-child**—a perfect dramatisation of the Old Testament Messianic hope. The whole of the Old Testament could be summarised in one word: "Expectancy".

**Hated and persecuted by the dragon.**

**Befriended and protected by God.**

The sun-clothed woman is a perfect symbol of God's community of believers on earth—His true Church in all ages—viewed in the ideal sense, as God loves to think of her. As the great prophetic drama of Revelation 12 opens, John sees the Church on the eve of the birth of Christ.

**The Man-Child—Symbol of Jesus Christ**

Note the five clear marks of identification:

**Awaited for centuries by the Church of God.**

**Born into the world as a helpless babe.**

**Hated and attacked by Satan.**

**Caught up to God and His throne.**

**Will rule all nations with a rod of iron.**

These specifications fit only one Person who has ever lived—the Lord Jesus Christ. They simply could not apply to anyone else.

## 2.—THE THREE STAGES OF SATAN'S WARFARE IN REVELATION 12

### Stage I.—At the Birth of Christ (vv 1-6)

The Devil, also, was familiar with the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, and behind the scenes he plotted to destroy the coming Saviour.

Immediately after Jesus was born, Satan, working through Rome's puppet king Herod, tried to destroy Jesus and defeat the plan of redemption. He also used Rome's official representative, Pilate, to authorise Christ's crucifixion and seal His tomb. However, in spite of His death and burial by Rome's agents, Christ escaped and was caught up to God and to His throne.

Baffled and beaten in his efforts to destroy Christ, Satan then turned and persecuted the Church, using Pagan Rome, the apostate Jews, and finally Papal Rome.

Though thousands of early Christians were cruelly martyred and thousands lapsed into apostasy, God preserved His Church by giving her the wings of a great eagle, which enabled her to escape to a refuge in the "wilderness", where she had "a place, prepared of God".

(The first stage of Satan's warfare extends from the birth of Christ to the beginning of Papal supremacy—A.D. 538.)

### Stage II.—In the Dark Ages (vv 13-16)

(See Chart No. 24—*The 1260 Days Prophecy*)

During the Dark Ages, God's true Church was outlawed from the great cities of apostate Christendom and driven into exile in "the wilderness". She was not found in Rome, Paris, Constantinople, or the other important centres of population, but in deserts, forests, caverns, and especially in the deep Alpine valleys of Central Europe. One of the best-known Christian communities to preserve a pure faith was the Waldenses, who, though cruelly persecuted, maintained their identity and faith for hundreds of years.