

A WOMAN IN TRAVAIL

Purpose of Study: To study and review the various occurrences and uses of a 'woman in travail' in scripture as a metaphor and to also discuss the "man child" that is born of the woman in Revelation 12. Scripture passages that are potentially related to the birth of the "man child" will also be discussed as well as a vision from Apostle Clarence Wheaton.

Hebrew and Greek Words Sometimes Translated as "Travail"

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance H3205 (yalad pron. yaw-lad') – "bear, beget, birthday, born, make to bring forth children, young, bring up, calve" (497 occurrences)

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance H2470 (chalah pron. khaw-law') – "beseech, be diseased, put to grief, be grieved, be grievous, infirmity"

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance G3449 (mochthos pron. mokh'-thos) – "painfulness, travail." (3 occurrences)

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance G5604 (odin o-deen') – "pain, sorrow, travail." (4 occurrences)

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance G5605 (odino o-dee'-no) – "birth pains" (3 occurrences)

Some Occurrences of H3205 in the Bible (Uses of H3205 Highlighted in Bold)

When related to actual child birth:

Genesis 3:16 – "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow **thou shalt bring forth** children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."

Genesis 4:1-2 – "1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, **and bare** Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. 2 And she again **bare** his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground."

Genesis 4:18 – "18 And unto Enoch **was born** Irad: and Irad **begat** Mehujael: and Mehujael **begat** Methusael: and Methusael **begat** Lamech."

Genesis 35:16-18 – "16 And they [CJM – Jacob and family] journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: **and Rachel travailed**, and she had hard labor. 17 And it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also. 18 And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin."

When related to sorrow, grief, work, or distress:

Exodus 18:8 – “8 And Moses told his father in law all that the LORD had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, **and all the travail** that had come upon them by the way, and how the LORD delivered them.”

Psalms 48:1-6 – “1 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. 2 Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. 3 God is known in her palaces for a refuge. 4 For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. 5 They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away. 6 Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, **as of a woman in travail.**”

Isaiah 13:6-9 – “6 Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. 7 Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt: 8 And they shall be afraid: **pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth:** they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. 9 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.”

Isaiah 21:2-3 – “2 A grievous vision is declared unto me; the treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously, and the spoiler spoileth [against Babylon]. Go up, O Elam [ancient Persia]: besiege, O Media [the Medes]; all the sighing thereof have I made to cease. 3 Therefore are my loins filled with pain: pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs **of a woman that travaileth:** I was bowed down at the hearing of it; I was dismayed at the seeing of it.”

Isaiah 26:16-18 – “16 LORD, in trouble have they [God's people] visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them. 17 Like as a woman with child, that draweth near **the time of her delivery**, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O LORD. 18 We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.”

Jeremiah 6:22-24 – “23 They shall lay hold on bow and spear [Babylon]; they are cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea; and they ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee, O daughter of Zion. 24 We have heard the fame thereof: our hands wax feeble: anguish hath taken hold of us, and pain, **as of a woman in travail.**”

Jeremiah 13:19-21 – “19 The cities of the south shall be shut up, and none shall open them: Judah shall be carried away captive all of it, it shall be wholly carried away captive. 20 Lift up your eyes, and behold them that come from the north: where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock? 21 What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee? for thou hast taught them to be captains, and as chief over thee: shall not sorrows take thee, **as a woman in travail?**”

Jeremiah 22:23-25 – “23 O inhabitant of Lebanon, that makest thy nest in the cedars, how gracious shalt thou be when pangs come upon thee, the pain **as of a woman in travail!** 24 As I live, saith the LORD, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence; 25 And I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of them whose face thou fearest, even into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans [small people group that came to rule Babylon].”

Micah 4:9-10 – “9 Now why dost thou cry out aloud? is there no king in thee? is thy counsellor perished? for pangs have taken thee **as a woman in travail**. 10 Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the LORD shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies.”

When related to God’s judgment and deliverance:

Isaiah 42:13-14 – “13 The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. 14 I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: **now will I cry like a travailing woman**; I will destroy and devour at once.”

Some Occurrences of H2470 in the Bible (Uses of H2470 Highlighted in Bold)

Jeremiah 4:29-31 – “29 The whole city [Jerusalem] shall flee for the noise of the horsemen and bowmen; they shall go into thickets, and climb up upon the rocks: every city shall be forsaken, and not a man dwell therein. 30 And when thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do? Though thou clothest thyself with crimson, though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold, though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair; thy lovers will despise thee, they will seek thy life. 31 For I have heard a voice **as of a woman in travail**, and the anguish as of her that bringeth forth her first child, the voice of the daughter of Zion [Jerusalem; God’s people; people of Israel], that bewaileth herself, that spreadeth her hands, saying, Woe is me now! for my soul is wearied because of murderers.”

Some Occurrences of G3449 in the Bible (Uses of G3449 Highlighted in Bold)

2 Corinthians 11:25-27 – “25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 In weariness and **painfulness**, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.”

1 Thessalonians 2:9 – “9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and **travail**: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.”

Some Occurrences of G5604 in the Bible (Uses of G5604 Highlighted in Bold)

1 Thessalonians 5:3-4 – “3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as **travail** upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.”

Travail in the Book of Mormon

1 Nephi 5:56 – “56 **And we did travail** and wade through much affliction in the wilderness; and our women did bear children in the wilderness.”

Mosiah 11:202 – “202 But notwithstanding all this, they [Alma and Mosiah’s sons] did impart much consolation to the church, confirming their faith, and exhorting them with longsuffering **and much travail**, to keep the commandments of God.”

Revelation 12

Revelation 12:1-6 – “1 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: 2 And she being with child cried, **travailing in birth**, and pained to be delivered. 3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. 4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. 5 **And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.** 6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.”

Apostle Clarence Wheaton Vision

“Why I Believe in Zion and the Building of the Temple”, Zion’s Advocate, September 1934, page 51:

At approximately three o’clock the next morning, I was suddenly awakened, as though some one had called me. I became wide awake instantly, and sat up in bed. The objects of the room, even the little casket, were clearly visible, as the room was bathed in moonlight. I was fully conscious of all my surroundings, but was soon wrapped in vision, and has the following most thrilling and inspiring experience:

My wife and I seemingly had reached the middle age, and the responsibilities of family life, with the rearing of children, etc., were over. We were engaged together in missionary work, and apparently had been appointed to a foreign field.

In the opening scene of this vision we were walking along a rough cobble-stone road in an easterly direction. The sides of the road were lined with strange trees, which, since traveling through California, we have learned were olive trees. We were in the vision under the impression that we were nearing the city of Jerusalem.

Suddenly, in a north-easterly direction, we noticed a peculiar cloud forming. It was rather black and moving with a rotating motion that caused us to stop with awe and wonderment as we gazed upon it. From all parts of the heavens, small fleecy bits of clouds were moving towards it as small bits of steel are attracted to a magnet. Around about us it became dark and threatening. Flashes of lightening pierced into it,

first from one side and then the other. Then thunder that would ensue caused the earth to tremble by its reverberations.

From behind the cloud a brilliant light began to send forth its rays, similar to sun rays, but it was not the sun, for this phenomenon was taking place in the wrong quarter of the heavens. These rays of light were white and brilliant, more so than the sunlight, and they dispelled all darkness upon the earth.

Suddenly, a great rending flash of lightening, much more powerful than the others, pierced into the very center of this great mass of cloud. The heavens and the earth were shaken, and the ground under our feet rocked to and fro. Then all became breathlessly silent, and a most glorious and thrilling scene unfolded before our eyes. This great cloud, seemingly, had parted, or was pushed back both directions from the center, as though it was the silent moving curtains of a beautifully appointed stage. The settings were magnificent. There appeared a great white throne, surrounded with soft, billowy white clouds. The whiteness thereof exceeded the whiteness of anything I have ever seen in this life. The light was more brilliant than the sun, and eclipsed it in glory.

Upon the throne was seated as beautiful woman. Never in my life have I seen a more perfectly formed creature. Every feature was symmetrical; complexion fair, and skin flawlessly white. Hair, light brown, lustrous, floating over her shoulders. Eyes were blue, with a straight-forward look of virtue, grace and courage. She was dressed in purest white linen which reached to her bare feet. Truly she was a queen in her glory.

In her lap lay a new born child of only a few hours, wrapped in a soft downy blanket, a most entrancing picture of motherhood. Upon the woman's face was a mingle expression of joy and pain, as is only seen upon the face of a mother who has just passed through her travail and given birth.

As we stood and gazed in astonishment at this most extraordinary scene, a voice, as from the heavens, spoke in a deep, vibrant tone and said, **"Behold she hath travailed, and brought forth Zion."** We were given to understand that the woman was the Church of Christ established April 6, 1830; **that the child was the Zion of God, which the church, through much spiritual travail and sorrow, must establish as a place of gathering for her children.**

(etc.) ...

This, my friends is my testimony, received by the revelation of God to my soul, in the presence of a witness, my wife, and I testify to all men that as God is my maker (and I have full consciousness of the fact that I will stand before Him at the judgment and give an accounting of these things), I that this testimony is true, ...

Based on this dream, the man child is the kingdom of Zion, where Christ will reign. It is up to the Church of Christ to establish the future literal kingdom of Zion and its spiritual characteristics. This will involve a degree of "travail" and "sorrow". The church will desire and lament for Zion and for the return of Christ and will labor for it. Since Christ will reign from Zion with a rod of iron, Christ is part of this future Zion or "man child" and is He who will "rule all nations with a rod of iron".

Regarding the Rod of Iron

The rod of iron is the word of God:

1 Nephi 3:68 – “68 And it came to pass that I beheld that **the rod of iron**, which my father had seen, was **the word of God**, which led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life; which waters are a representation of the love of God;”

Christ shall rule with God’s word:

Psalms 2:7-9 – “7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. 8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. 9 **Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron**; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”

Revelation 19:15-16 – “15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: **and he shall rule them with a rod of iron**: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

Isaiah 2:3 – “And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: **for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.**”

We as part of Zion will rule with Jesus Christ:

Revelation 2:26-27 – “26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, **to him will I give power over the nations**: 27 **And he shall rule them with a rod of iron**; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.”

Christ as the Groom

Matthew 9:14-15 – “14 Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? 15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, **as long as the bridegroom is with them?** but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.”

Matthew 25:1 – “1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, **and went forth to meet the bridegroom.**”

Ephesians 5:25,29-32 – “25 **Husbands**, love your wives, **even as Christ** also loved the church, and gave himself for it; ... 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, **even as the Lord the church**: 30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. 32 This is a great mystery: **but I speak concerning Christ and the church.**”

Revelation 19:7-9 – “7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, **and his wife hath made herself ready.** 8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. 9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”

Therefore, Christ is often represented in scripture as a groom to His bride, the church. The Church of Christ has taken the name of Christ (we do in the covenant of baptism). Though, as already stated, it is also true that Christ will also reign in Zion with a rod of iron and will rule as part of the future Zion, or this “man child”. Christ is both a husband to the church and the king of Zion.

The New Jerusalem Is Also Represented As the Bride of Christ

Revelation 21:1-2,9-10 – “1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. 2 And I John saw **the holy city, new Jerusalem,** coming down from God out of heaven, **prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.** ... 9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, **I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.** 10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, **and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem,** descending out of heaven from God”

Other Opinions Regarding the Man Child

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers:

There can be no doubt that this man child is Christ. The combination of features is too distinct to admit of doubt, it is the one who will feed His flock like a shepherd (Isaiah 40:12), who is to have, not His own people, but all nations as His inheritance (Psalm 2:7-9), and whose rule over them is to be supreme and irresistible.

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary:

12:1-6 The church, under the emblem of a woman, the mother of believers, was seen by the apostle in vision, in heaven. She was clothed with the sun, justified, sanctified, and shining by union with Christ, the Sun of Righteousness. The moon was under her feet; she was superior to the reflected and feebler light of the revelation made by Moses. Having on her head a crown of twelve stars; the doctrine of the gospel, preached by the twelve apostles, is a crown of glory to all true believers. **As in pain to bring forth a holy family;** desirous that the conviction of sinners might end in their conversion. ... but in spite of the opposition of enemies, **the church brought forth a manly issue of true and faithful professors,** in whom Christ was truly formed anew; even the mystery of Christ, that Son of God who should rule the nations, and in whose right his members partake the same glory. This blessed offspring was protected of God.

Barne's Notes on the Bible:

And she brought forth a man child - Representing, according to the view above taken, **the church in its increase and prosperity** - as if a child were born that was to rule over all nations.

Who was to rule all nations - That is, according to this view, **the church thus represented was destined to reign in all the earth, or all the earth was to become subject to its laws.**

I understand the "man child" here, therefore, **to refer to the church in its increase under the Messiah**, and the idea to be, that that church was, at the time referred to, about to be enlarged, and that, though its increase was opposed, yet it was destined ultimately to assert a mild sway over all the world.

And her child was caught up unto God - This is evidently a symbolical representation. Some event was to occur, or some divine interposition was to take place, as if the child thus born were caught up from the earth to save it from death, and was rendered secure by being in the presence of God, and near his throne.

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible:

And she brought forth a man child, ... Not Christ, literally and personally considered, or Christ in his human nature, as made of a woman, and born of a virgin, which was a fact that had been years ago; but Christ mystically, **or Christ in his members, who are called by his name, because he is formed in them, and they are the seed of the woman, the church;** ...

who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron; this has a manifest reference to Psalm 2:9; which psalm, and the passage referred to in it, evidently belong to Christ; and as this is represented as something future, what should be hereafter, and not what would immediately take place, **it may regard the kingdom of Christ in the last times**, ... and as this may be applied to Christ mystical, the seed of the church, and members of Christ, as it is in Revelation 2:26; **it may relate to their reign with Christ on earth**, when they shall sit on thrones, and judge the world, when the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to there; ...

and her child caught up unto God, and to his throne; which is to be understood not of Christ's ascent to heaven in human nature, when he was set down on the same throne with his Father; nor of Christ mystical, or of the saints being caught up into the air, to meet the Lord and be for ever with him, and sit down with him on the same throne; **but rather of some glorious advance of the church and kingdom of Christ on earth;** ...

Passages Potentially Related to Revelation 12's Woman in Travail

John 16:16-22 – “16 A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. 17 Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? 18 They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith. 19 Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye

enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? 20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, **That ye shall weep and lament**, but the world shall rejoice: **and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.** 21 **A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.** 22 **And ye now therefore have sorrow:** but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.”

Micah 5 – “1 Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek. 2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. 3 Therefore will he give them up, **until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth:** then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. 4 And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.”

Matthew 24:6-8 – “6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. 8 All these are the beginning **of sorrows.**”

Galatians 4:19-20 – “19 My little children, **of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,** 20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.”

Another Passage

Isaiah 66:6-13 – “6 A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the LORD that rendereth recompence to his enemies. 7 **Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child.** 8 Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? **for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.** 9 Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the LORD: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God. 10 Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her: 11 That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. 12 For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. 13 As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.”

- Who is the “she” in verse 7? The church prior to the future Zion? Zion? Commentators speak of both possibilities.
- Is the “man child” in verse 7 the bringing forth of the gospel in the early church and early converts to the church that readily accepted the gospel?
- Note that in Revelation 12, the church travailed and had sorrow prior to delivering the man child. This is unlike verse 7.
- In verse 8, Zion travails (unlike verse 7) and brings forth the children of Zion.