

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 15TH-16TH, 2018 // BOOK OF REVELATION

AN EPIC DRAMA (REV 12:1-6)

A COMPLICATED, MASH-UP DRAMA

What makes chapter 12 unique and a little complicated is the blend of literal and metaphorical symbols. It also blends past, present, and future events.

- This chapter isn't to be taken as systematic theology, but a dramatic vision of good vs. evil and the war between God and Satan.

THE 1ST HALF TAKES PLACE IN HEAVEN

The drama begins in the heavens, but will eventually move to the earth where the rest of ch. 12-18 remain.

THE 1ST "GREAT SIGN" IS A WOMAN

The 1st character we meet in this drama is a "woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head."

THE WOMAN IS INTERPRETED A COUPLE WAYS

- The Catholics believe this is Mary and the 12 disciples. The Messianic Jews think this is Israel and the 12 tribes. Most Protestants believe this is the Church and the stars are followers of Christ. Others believe this is a heroine character that symbolizes an epic battle (cyclical).

"SHE WAS PREGNANT...ABOUT TO GIVE BIRTH."

The child of the woman is the 3rd character in this drama.

THE 2ND CHARACTER IS EASY TO PEG

The antagonist of the drama is a "great fiery red dragon." Many cultures have stories of evil dragons, but the Bible tells us who this dragon is, Satan.

7 HEADS, 10 HORNS, AND 7 CROWNS

The dragon had 7 heads that symbolize complete wisdom. On the 7 heads were diadems (crowns) that are not symbols of victory, but show complete understanding. The 10 horns show extreme power.

- These can also be more concrete attributes of how Satan will work in the End Times.

7 HEADS MAY BE ERAS OF DIFFERENT EMPIRES

Daniel 2:31-45 prophesies of 7 different empires that will come and go before the end of the world. By John's time, 5 had passed and he was living in the 6th.

- Egypt > Assyria > Babylon > **Persia (Daniel)** > Greece > **Rome (John)** > "Revived" or "Divided Rome." (the last empire)

THE 10 HORNS AND 7 CROWNS

Most scholars believe the 10 horns are political institutions that will unite under 1 leader (Antichrist). The 7 crowns are more than likely the leaders of the 10 governments. 3 will become one nation, making 7 crowns.

THE DRAGON "SWEEP AWAY A THIRD OF THE STARS"

v4 is probably a flashback to pre-Genesis when Satan was cast out of heaven and he took a 1/3 of the angels with him.

- v4 also shows us just how evil the devil is. He "stood in front of the woman" in the hopes of devouring her child. This should remind us to be careful how we speak about encountering Satan.
- **1 Peter 5:8 (CSB)**

THE 3RD CHARACTER IS ALSO OBVIOUS

The Son is obviously Jesus Who will lead the "nations with an iron rod" (Ps. 2, Gal. 4).

"HER CHILD WAS CAUGHT UP TO GOD"

This phrase bothers many people because it appears as though Jesus had to run from the dragon, but it actually shows the opposite. **God's plan unfolds to show that He is always in control.**

"THE WOMAN FLED TO THE WILDERNESS"

Some may see this as Mary fleeing to Egypt when Jesus was born, or this could be the church living in rural areas during the 1260 days of intense persecution.

- It may not be a literal "wilderness," but a social one. Maybe Christians will become socially unacceptable in more urban areas?

A WAR IN HEAVEN (REV 12:7-12)

THE ACTION OF THE DRAMA INTENSIFIES

This section blends the past (Luke 10:18), present, and future. This section also brings to life scripture we often quote, but have little grasp on how important it is (Eph. 6:12).

- Though Satan had taken a 1/3 of heaven, Michael the archangel overthrows the devil and throws him out of the heavens.

SATAN IS NOT CONFINED TO HELL

It is important to remember that Satan and his demons are not confined to hell, but are focused on destroying people on earth.

THE "ANCIENT SERPENT...THE DEVIL AND SATAN"

Devil literally means slanderer and *Satan* means accuser. **The greatest tactics of Satan are talking about and blaming others. We should be careful with our tongue!**

A VOICE FROM HEAVEN BRIEFLY INTERRUPTS

v10-12 give John a much needed break from all the events he had covered. The interruption shows us a couple things.

- We learn Who the ultimate victor in war is, Who has true authority, and where the salvation of humanity comes from.

WE ALSO LEARN HOW WE LIVE VICTORIOUSLY

v11 is one of the most important scriptures in the NT. We are told that we overcome the forces of hell "by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of [our] testimony."

- Angels defeated Satan in heaven, but **we defeat him daily by depending on the Cross, remembering what He has done, and sharing our stories.**

AND WE MUST BE WILLING TO LOSE IT ALL

v11 also says, "they did not love their lives to the point of death." This means that true Christians will give up all the things this world finds valuable in order to have a close relationship with Jesus.

- **We must lose our lives to find them** (Mt. 10:39). The mature Christian knows the things of this world are fleeting.

WITH "GREAT FURY" (V12)

John warns the people on "the earth and the sea because the devil has come down to you with great fury because he knows his time is short."

- We see here that Satan will use two beasts (land and sea) and that he will come with extreme persecution. We also see his time is short.

REDIRECTED FURY (REV 12:13-17)

FROM THE HEAVENS TO THE EARTH

The woman is reintroduced and the dragon's attention goes back to her. This is symbolic of Satan's attack on the Church, both the people and the **institution**.

- If Satan cannot destroy God or His angels, he will try to destroy His greatest creation, people and **His Bride the Church**.

"THE WOMAN WAS GIVEN TWO WINGS"

The "eagles wings" given to the woman are metaphors for swift and powerful protection from God during the Great Tribulation (Ex. 19:4). During this "time, times, and half a time" the woman will be "nourished."

- This is another reference to the last 3 ½ years of the Great Tribulation also mentioned in Daniel 7 and 12.

THE IMAGERY INDICATES INTENSE PERSECUTION

John records that Satan's fury is like a "serpent spewed water like a river flowing after the woman to sweep her away with a flood."

- v16 is interesting. The earth and nature in some way will help the people of God escape some of the persecution.

WAGING WAR AGAINST THE "OFFSPRING"

Many believe this means that Satan will move from the Church as a whole to attacking individual Christians (prominent leaders?).

- Matt. 16:18 says, "**the forces of hell will not overpower**" the church. Since Satan learns this, he will kill Christians in a desperate attempt to kill the faith. **Think the beaches of Libya.**

CHRISTIANS DEFINED

The "offspring" that Satan wants to destroy are represented as people that "keep the commands of God and hold firmly to the testimony about Jesus."

- **We throw the word Christian around so much, but do we truly know what that means? Are we Christian by biblical definition?**

OVERCOMERS & OFFSPRING / WHO ARE OVERCOMERS & OFFSPRING?

Chapter 12 not only shows us the epic battle of God and Satan, but it shows us where we fall into the story. Though we will be persecuted by Satan, we are marked as overcomers of evil and the offspring of God.

But, what does that look like? Those who have **faith in Who Jesus is**. Those who **believe in what He has done**. Those who **apply the teachings of Christ to their daily lives**. Those who **obey** His commands.

Those who **endure** when pressure arises. Those who are **willing to sacrifice it all** for His name.