

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 16TH, 2018 // BOOK OF REVELATION

*Revelation 12 records a vision John receives that symbolically communicates the reality of spiritual warfare down through the ages, but especially during the last days.*

## THE WOMAN & THE DRAGON (12:1-4)

John has returned to his heavenly viewpoint at the end of Revelation 11, and now he sees a "great sign" in heaven.

- Think of a nighttime laser light show- this is the kind of thing John describes.
- The first character in this "great sign" is a woman- clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, with a crown of 12 stars.
- She was pregnant and crying out in birth pains.

### WHO DOES THE WOMAN REPRESENT?

1. Catholic view, the Virgin Mary, "Queen of Heaven" (the problem with this view is that this character is symbolic, not literal).
2. The ideal, redeemed people of God as God sees them, glorious and splendid.
3. Israel (parallels with Gen. 37:9-11, Jer. 3:1, Ezekiel 16:32-35, Hosea 2:2).

The 2nd character in the drama is an enormous red dragon with 7 heads and 7 crowns.

- Many cultures have stories of dragons, but the Bible tells us exactly who this dragon is, Satan, and describes his attributes.
- The Dragon has 7 heads and 10 horns.
- On his 7 heads were diadems, different from the victorious crowns worn by the woman, but still shows complete understanding.

7 heads further shows completion and wisdom and 10 horns shows extreme power.

- 7 heads can be eras of power and empires.
- By John's time 5 had passed, 1 was in power, and 1 would come into power.
- Maybe this is Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and the "Revived Rome".
- The 10 Horns may be political institutions that will unite under 1 leader.

In vs. 4, John sees the dragons' power, as with his tail he swept down 1/3 of heaven's stars and cast them down to earth.

- This is symbolic language to describe that when Satan fell, he swept away a third of the angelic host with him (Isa. 14:12-15, Ezk. 28:12-17).
- The dragon stood before the woman ready to devour her child as she gave birth to him.

Throughout the story of the Bible, Satan desperately attempted to wipe out the nation of Israel and the messianic line.

- When Jesus was born, the dragon's struggle to "devour" the woman's son is evident both through Herod's slaughter of the Bethlehem babies and the crucifixion.
- This is a fulfillment of the struggle between Satan and Jesus first mentioned in Gen. 3:15.

## A SON IS BORN (12:5-6)

Now a 3rd character appears in this drama.

- We saw a woman (Israel), a dragon (Satan), and now we see a son (Jesus the Messiah).
- In spite of Satan's efforts to prevent it, Israel gave birth to a son- Jesus the Messiah.
- Jesus the Messiah is described in his humanity as a "male child", but also as the king of universe who will "rule the nations with an iron scepter" (Psalm 2).

Satan couldn't stop Jesus from accomplishing redemption and therefore being exalted to the right hand of God the Father at His throne (vs. 5).

- Unable to stop Jesus, the dragon then turned his assault to the woman (God's people).
- The Woman "fled to the wilderness" to a place prepared by God where she was to be nourished for 1,260 days (or 3 ½ years).

Most likely what this is symbolizing is God's protection over His people during the experience of His wrath in the last half of the tribulation.

- One view is that God will frustrate and thwart Satan's attempt to destroy God's people during this time by literally hiding them in the wilderness (Matt. 24:15-21).
- Although they're protected from God's wrath, Satan still comes against them with attacks.

### PROTECTED IN THE WILDERNESS

- We're protected from the worst thing that could ever happen to us- the full experience of God's wrath and the 2nd death.
- But Satan will still go after God's people- especially those whom he sees as a threat to his work.
- Satan's attacks against you are limited in their power- he can never touch your "nephesh" or "psuche" (your soul).

## THE WAR IN HEAVEN (12:7-12)

There has been a war in heaven since the fall of Satan (Isa. 14:12-14, Ezk. 28:11-18).

- Satan and his fallen angels (demons) have been actively opposed to both holy angels and God's people since Satan's fall.
- This scene that John sees portrays the spiritual reality that is given to us in Eph. 6:12- "... our struggle is not against flesh and blood".

The archangel ("ruler of angels") Michael is pictured as the defender of God's people and a heavenly general of sorts.

- Michael appears a few times in Scripture as the guardian angel of Israel (Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1) and fights on their behalf with the guardian angels of the gentile nations.
- In Jude 9, he is said to have contended with the devil for the body of Moses.

The dragon was strong enough to sweep down a third of the stars, but not strong enough to prevail over Michael and his angels.

- The dragon was hurled down to earth and his angels with him.
- This is most likely symbolizing the final exclusion of the devil from access to God shortly before Christ's return.

The dragon's identity is further unmasked- he's called the "ancient serpent" (Gen. 3), the devil ("slanderer"), and Satan ("accuser").

- He's described as the one who "leads the whole world astray".
- Considering all the events covered over the last 9 verses, John deserves a break, and a voice from heaven provides one in verses 10-12.

The interruption shows who is the ultimate victor, who has true authority, and where our salvation comes from.

- It also shows us by what means we conquer Satan- **only through Christ's blood and our testimony can we defeat evil.**
- Angels defeated him in heaven, but we defeat him day in day out by depending on these weapons along with "loving not our lives".

In v12 John is warning us that since Satan has been defeated in heaven, his fury will be directed at earth for short, but very furious time.

- It will come by land and sea, where the 2 beasts will arise.

### THREE THEOLOGICAL TRUTHS-

1. Satan is already defeated.
2. Satan's attacks take the form of false accusations.
3. Satan is a deceiver that leads the world astray.

## THE EARTH & THE EAGLE (12:13-17)

The Woman is reintroduced and the dragon's attention goes back to her.

- This is symbolic of the continued attack on God's People by Satan during the last days.
- If Satan cannot defeat God and His angels, then maybe he can destroy His people.
- The "wings of the great eagle" means swift and powerful protection (Ex. 19:4)

The protection will specifically be during the "time, times, and half of a time" (3 ½ years mentioned in Daniel 7 and 12) of unparalleled persecution against God's people.

- The imagery is very vivid of Satan's attack being like a serpent spewing water (persecution) like a torrent.
- The message is clear- Satan will violently attack God's people- but it will be in vain.

The "woman's offspring" could best be understood as individual Christians, rather than the collective group of God's people (Israel or the church).

- They are further described as "those who keep the commandments of God" and "hold to the testimony of Jesus"- those who are truly Christians demonstrate it by what they do.

Satan's attack against the woman, against the woman's son, against the woman in the wilderness, and against the woman's offspring- all failed.

- As the chapter ends, John sees the dragon taking a stand on the seashore so that he can call forth from the deep something called, "the beast".
- The "beast" will be his primary instrument in the last persecution.

We start to see Matt. 16:18 come alive with this account as truly, "the gates of hell will not prevail" against the people of God.

- Since the Church will always stand, Satan will kill believers in a desperate attempt to conquer their belief- but he still won't win.
- In spite of our promised victory, we will still face attacks from our enemy until Christ returns to forever destroy him.

- **Satan will come against you with discouragement, deception, and distraction- all in an attempt to destroy your hope, joy, and life in Christ.**
- **But we have been given three very powerful weapons against Satan in this chapter!**