

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCTOBER 19TH–20TH, 2024 // REVELATION

## AN EPIC DRAMA (REVELATION 12:1–6) A MASH-UP DRAMATIC VISION

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 FIRST HALF TAKES PLACE IN HEAVEN

The drama begins in the heavens but will eventually move to the Earth where the rest of Chapters 12–18 remain.

- The first "great sign" is a "woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head."

## DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF THE WOMAN

Catholics believe this is Mary and the 12 disciples. 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 between good and evil (cyclical).

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

The child of the woman is the third character in this drama.

## THE SECOND CHARACTER IS EASY TO IDENTIFY

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

## 7 HEADS, 10 HORNS, 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 complete understanding. The 10 horns show extreme power.

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

## THE 7 HEADS MAY BE ERAS OF 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, five had passed and he was living in the sixth.

- 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 one leader (Antichrist). The 7 crowns are more than likely the leaders of the 10 governments. Three will become one nation, making 7 crowns.

- We will talk about this more in coming chapters.

## THE DRAGON "SWEEP AWAY A THIRD OF THE STARS"

V. 4a is probably a flashback to pre-Genesis when Satan was cast out of heaven and he took a third of the angels with him.

- V. 4b also shows just how evil Satan 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 Satan**.

## V. 4 MAY ALSO BE A HISTORICAL REFERENCE

Some scholars believe the second part of v. 4 is a reference to Herod attempting to kill baby Jesus. This would allude to the fact that Herod and other enemies of Jesus were ultimately driven by the devil.

## THE THIRD CHARACTER IS OBVIOUS

The Son is obviously Jesus Who will lead the "nations with an iron rod" (Psalm 2; Galatians 4).

## "HER CHILD WAS CAUGHT UP TO GOD"

This phrase bothers some because it appears 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 INTO THE WILDERNESS"

Some may see this as Mary fleeing to Egypt when Jesus was born, or this could be the church living in ostracization during the 1,260 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?

## WAR IN HEAVEN (REVELATION 12:7–12)

### 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 (Ephesians 6:12).

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

## SATAN ISN'T CONFINED TO HELL

Satan and demons aren't confined to hell but are focused on destroying people on earth.

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

*Devil* translates to *slanderer* and *Satan* to *accuser*. **The greatest tactics of Satan are slander and blame. When our tongues are out of control, we are acting like Satan!**

## A VOICE FROM HEAVEN BRIEFLY INTERRUPTS

Vs. 10–12 give John a much needed break from all the events he had covered. The interruption shows us a couple of things.

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

## HOW TO LIVE VICTORIOUSLY

V. 11 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. **We defeat him daily by remembering what Jesus has done on the cross and sharing our stories.**

## AND WE MUST BE WILLING TO GIVE IT ALL

V. 11 also says, "**they did not love their lives to the point of death.**" This means true Christians will sacrifice the things this world finds valuable in order to have a relationship with Jesus.

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

## WITH "GREAT FURY" (V. 12)

John warns 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 (REVELATION 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"

Eagle's wings are metaphors for swift and powerful protection during the Great Tribulation (Exodus 19:4). During this "time, times, and half a time," the woman will be "nourished."

- This is another reference to the last 3½ years of the Great Tribulation, also mentioned in Daniel 7 and 12.

## THE IMAGERY INDICATES INTENSE PERSECUTION

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

- V. 16 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?).

- Matthew 16:18 says that **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.

## THE DEFINITION OF A CHRISTIAN

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

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

## THERE IS A WAR WAGING

- Our souls are eternal, and Chapter 12 reminds us **there is a spiritual war taking place all around us**.
- Satan hates humanity because of God's love for us. We are God's greatest creation and in his hatred for God, he wants to destroy the only thing made in His image.

## BUT WE ARE ASSURED VICTORY, IF...

- Though Christians may be persecuted, hurt, or even killed, **we are not to live in fear of evil** because **true followers** are promised victory through the cross and remembering and sharing God's grace and love.
- We don't fight the war with brute force but with **prayer, the Word, and being a witness**.

## WHAT DOES A CHRISTIAN LOOK LIKE?

- Jesus said **we will know a tree by its fruit** (Matthew 7). This means there will be visible evidence of true faith. Of course, Jesus is the ultimate judge of one's eternity, **but true Christians should be a witness of their faith via how they live, think, act, and treat others**.
- One who puts their **faith and trust in Who Jesus is and what He has done for our salvation** (John 3:16).
- One who **obeys and applies the teachings of the Bible** (John 14:15).
- One who **endures** pressure (Matthew 10:22).
- One who **genuinely loves others** (John 13:35).
- One who is **in fellowship with the church** and other Believers (Hebrews 10:24–25).
- One who displays the **Fruit and Gifts of the Spirit** (Galatians 5; 1 Corinthians 12–14; Ephesians 4).
- And, one who is **willing to sacrifice it all** for His name (Revelation 12:11).
- Is this "fruit" present and apparent in us?**