

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCTOBER 19TH–20TH, 2024 // REVELATION

THE WOMAN & THE DRAGON (REVELATION 12:1–4)

The key to understanding Chapter 12 is Semeion Mega (“Great Sign”) in v. 1.

- The “great signs” presented in Chapter 12 are symbols pointing to greater spiritual realities or a dramatic presentation that explains the coming of Christ’s Kingdom symbolically.

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, with the moon under her feet, and a crown of 12 stars.
- She was pregnant and crying out in birth pains.

WHO DOES THE WOMAN REPRESENT?

1. The Catholic view: she is 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, 12 stars = 12 tribes (parallels with Genesis 37:9–11; Jeremiah 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 “*diademas*,” different from the victorious crowns worn by the woman, but symbols of power and royalty.

7 heads show completion and wisdom and 10 horns show 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 later 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 v. 4, John sees the dragon’s power, as his tail swept down a third 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 (Isaiah 14:12–15; Ezekiel 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.
- Genesis 3:15

A SON IS BORN (REVELATION 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).

- Despite 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 the Universe who will “rule all nations with an iron rod” (see also Psalm 2).

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

Perhaps this is a symbol of 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 (Matthew 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 second death.

- But Satan will still go after God’s people, especially those whom he sees as a threat to his work.
- If you’re in Christ, Satan’s attacks against you are limited in their power—he can never touch your soul (John 10:28)
- Matthew 10:28

THE WAR IN HEAVEN (REVELATION 12:7–12)

There has been a war in heaven since the fall of Satan (Isaiah 14:12–14; Ezekiel 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 given to us in Ephesians 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 (Daniel 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 most likely symbolizes the final exclusion of the devil from access to God shortly before Christ’s return.

The Bible seems to indicate that even after their rebellion against God, Satan and his demons have still had some access to God (Job 1:6–7; 1 Kings 22:19–23; Zechariah 3:1).

- In modern diplomacy, during times of war, diplomats from hostile nations are often expelled as a sign of imminent conflict.
- At this point during the halfway mark of the tribulation, this heavenly conflict will escalate.

The dragon’s identity is further unmasked. He’s called the “ancient serpent” (Genesis 3), the devil (“slanderer”), and Satan (“accuser”).

- He’s described as the one who “deceives the whole world” (v. 9).
- Considering all the events covered over the last nine verses, John deserves a break, and a voice from heaven provides one in vs. 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. We defeat him each day by depending on these weapons and not loving our lives.

In v. 12, John warns us that since Satan has been defeated in heaven, his fury will be directed at Earth for a short, but very furious time.

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

THREE THEOLOGICAL TRUTHS:

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

THE EARTH & THE EAGLE (REVELATION 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 he thinks maybe he can destroy God’s people.
- The “wings of a great eagle” means swift and powerful protection (Exodus 19:4).

The protection will specifically be during the “time, times, and half a time” (3 ½ years mentioned in Daniel 7 and 12) of persecution and martyrdom of 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 simple and clear—Satan will violently attack God’s people, but it will be in vain.

“The dragon was furious with the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring...”

- The woman’s offspring could 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 commands of God” and “hold firmly to the testimony about Jesus.” Those who are truly Christians demonstrate it by what they do.

AN INDICATION OF OUR IDENTITY:

Those who are truly “offspring”...

- Keep the commandments of God (v. 17).
- Hold to the testimony of Jesus and possess the character of Christ in our lives (v. 17).
- Endure to the end, even when pressure arises (v. 11).
- Conquer the false accusations and deceptions of the enemy (v. 11).

Satan’s attacks against the woman, the woman’s son, the woman in the wilderness, and 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 Matthew 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.
- Despite our promised victory, we will still face attacks from our enemy until Christ returns to destroy him forever.

DESPITE OUR PROMISED VICTORY, WE WILL BE ATTACKED.

- Satan will come against Christians with discouragement, deception, temptation, and distraction, all to try to destroy hope, joy, and life in Christ. He wants you fruitless and impotent.
- But we have been given three very powerful weapons to conquer Satan in this chapter!

“BLOOD OF THE LAMB...” (ROMANS 8:1–4)

- We must be washed and we must be willing to repent.

“WORD OF OUR TESTIMONY...” (MATTHEW 10:32)

- We proclaim Christ with our words and our lives.

“LOVING NOT OUR LIVES...” (1 JOHN 2:15–17)

- We must love what’s eternal (God’s Kingdom) more than what’s temporary (the things of this world).
- Ephesians 6:13–14