

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCTOBER 20TH, 2024 // REVELATION

THE WOMAN & THE DRAGON (REVELATION 12:1-4) AN EPIC DRAMA THROUGHOUT HISTORY

Revelation 12 is unique and a bit complicated because it blends literal and metaphorical symbols to communicate past, present, and future events into one epic drama.

- This chapter isn't meant to be taken as systematic theology but is to be viewed as a dramatic display of good and evil and the war between God and Satan.

THE FIRST FIGURE IN THIS EPIC DRAMA

John returned to his heavenly vantage point and described the first of seven "great signs" he saw.

- John describes the first main figure in this "great sign": **"a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head."** The woman was **pregnant and crying out in birth pains.**

WHO DOES THIS WOMAN REPRESENT?

- The Catholic view is that this is the Virgin Mary and the 12 disciples of Jesus.
- A common belief is that this woman represents Israel and the 12 tribes.
- Some believe this is the Church and the stars are followers of Jesus.
- Those with a cyclical view believe this is simply the protagonist in this epic battle.

THE ANTAGONIST IN THIS EPIC DRAMA

John introduces the second character: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and seven crowns.

- Though many cultures throughout history have stories of dragons, the Bible tells us that this dragon is not a literal dragon but represents Satan and will be used to describe his nature and character.

THE SEVEN DIADEMS ON THE SEVEN HEADS

The 7 crowns on the dragon's heads are different from the crowns that represent victory. These are diadems (though they look like crowns). They only acknowledge position.

- The 7 heads of the dragon wearing the 7 diadems show an unsuccessful claim to power and authority: He wants to be considered a king!

THE SEVEN HEADS OF THE DRAGON

7 heads show a complete understanding, and it's possible the 7 heads are eras of power and empires (as prophesied in Daniel 2:31-45) that would rise and fall before the end of the world.

- By John's time, 5 had passed (*Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece*). He was living in the 6th (*Rome*), and the 7th and last empire would come into power ("*Revived*" or "*Divided*" Rome).

THE 10 HORNS ON THE DRAGON

The 10 horns represent the extreme power the dragon held.

- Some scholars believe the 10 horns are political institutions that will unite under one leader, the Antichrist. The 7 crowns represent those positioned to lead the 10 governments after several join together to become one nation.

THE DRAGON "SWEEPED AWAY A THIRD OF THE STARS"

In v. 4, John sees the dragon's power as its tail swept down a third of heaven's stars and cast them to earth.

- Since stars typically represent angels, this is most likely symbolic language to describe Satan's fall. When he was cast out of heaven, he took a third of the angels with him (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:12-17).

BE SERIOUS! BE ALERT... (1 PETER 5:8)

John sees the dragon waiting in front of the woman for her to give birth so he might devour her child.

- In the next verses, we will unpack who the child is, but here we see just how evil the Devil is, as he waits in hopes of devouring this child. This shows that there is a very real enemy who should not be ignored.

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

"SHE GAVE BIRTH TO A SON..."

The third character in this drama is described as a male child who was going to rule all nations with a rod (see Psalm 2), who is Jesus.

- Though the dragon tried to devour the child at birth (*King Herod in Matthew 2:16-18*), he was unsuccessful in preventing the King of the Universe from being born and bringing redemption to the people of God.

"HER CHILD WAS CAUGHT UP TO GOD..."

V. 5 shows that Jesus is exalted and at the right hand of the Father (Acts 7:55-56; Romans 8:34).

- Unable to stop Jesus, the dragon turned his attention and attacked the woman (**God's people**). The woman "fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared by God, to be nourished there for 1,260 days" (or 3 ½ years).

"THE WOMAN FLED TO THE WILDERNESS"

This could be the Church leaving urban areas and seeking refuge in more rural areas to escape 1,260 days of intense persecution. Some believe the "place prepared by God" is Petra on the Jordanian coast of the Dead Sea.

- It is likely this is symbolic of God's protection over His people during the pouring out of His wrath in the last half of the tribulation.

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

A SPIRITUAL BATTLE IN THE HEAVENS

This passage tells us there has been a battle in heaven since the fall of Satan (Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:11-18). Since his fall, Satan and his angels (demons) have been actively opposed to God, holy angels, and the people of God.

- We see the spiritual reality given to us in Ephesians 6:12, that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood."

SATAN IS NOT CONFINED TO HELL...YET!

Though Satan commanded a third of the angelic hosts, he was outnumbered and overpowered by the archangel Michael and was thrown to Earth along with his angels.

- This most likely symbolizes the final exclusion of Satan from access to God shortly before Christ's return, but until that time they are focused on destroying people on Earth.

THE DRAGON'S IDENTITY IS FURTHER REVEALED

We see the great dragon referred to as the "ancient serpent," alluding to the devil's influence in the garden at the temptation and the fall of humanity (Genesis 3).

- The devil ("slanderer"), or Satan, is the "accuser of our brothers and sisters" and is described as the one who leads the whole world astray.

"I HEARD A LOUD VOICE..."

This voice interrupts this battle playing out before John to show him Who the victor is, Who has true authority, and where our salvation comes from.

- Satan is defeated in heaven, and we defeat him here and now through the blood of Christ and our testimony along with not loving our lives.

THE DRAGON'S REDIRECTED FURY (REVELATION 12:13-17)

"THE WOMAN WAS GIVEN TWO WINGS"

The woman is reintroduced, and the dragon's attention is back on her. This is symbolic of Satan's continued attacks on God's people. Satan cannot defeat God or His angels, so he diverts his attention to try and destroy God's greatest creation: people and the Bride of Christ, the church.

- The "wings of the great eagle" means there will be swift and powerful protection (Exodus 19:4).

THE FEROCITY OF THE DRAGON

John describes the ferocity of the dragon's attacks against the woman as water being spewed like a river from his mouth. This is most likely symbolic of the constant and unparalleled persecution of the people of God.

- The Earth swallowing up the river as it swept the woman away shows that these attacks are futile.

"WAR AGAINST THE REST OF HER OFFSPRING"

These thwarted attempts make the enemy furious, so he sets off to wage war against the rest of her offspring. This may mean the focus of previous attacks has been the collective group of God's people (Israel or the Church), but now his attacks are focused on the individual, "those who keep the commands of God" and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

THE GATES OF HELL WILL NOT PREVAIL

- Matthew 16:18 comes alive in this epic drama. The Church will stand against the attacks of Satan. We know, and Satan knows, he is a defeated enemy. We will still face persecution until Christ returns to forever destroy him.
- **Satan will come against us in an attempt to destroy our hope, joy, and life in Christ. But this chapter gives three weapons against Satan...**

OUR WEAPONS ARE NOT CARNAL

- We must have **faith in Who Jesus is** and **believe what he has done.**
- We must **apply His teachings to our daily lives, obey His commands**, and remember his promises and faithfulness to help us **endure** through difficult times.
- We must ultimately **be willing to sacrifice it all** for His name.