

THE WOMAN AND THE DRAGON

Introduction:

1. With the sounding of the seven trumpets, one section of the book of Revelation ended.
 2. The second section begins with chapter 12 and the vision of the conflict between the woman and the dragon.
 3. Some believe that this section contains the contents of the “little book” that John was told to eat (10:9-10).
 4. Whether or not that is accurate, this section begins to detail how the Roman Empire became a tool of Satan for the persecution of the church.
 5. Thus, God begins to show His people how He will protect them and defeat Rome.
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- I. The Dragon Seeks to Destroy the Woman’s Child (12:1-6)
 - A. John was shown a great sign in heaven – a woman and a red dragon.
 1. The idea is that John saw these things in the sky (or, from the perspective of heaven).
 2. We are not to think that these things happened in Heaven.
 3. The word “wonder” is actually the word for “sign.”
 - B. The clothing of the woman is described to emphasize its significance.
 1. She is clothed with the light of the sun, moon, and stars.
 2. This is symbolic of the totality of revealed truth from God.
 3. Patriarchal Age – *starlight*; Mosaic Age – *moonlight*; Christian Age – *sunlight* (cf. Hebrews 1:1-2; Ephesians 3:4-5; 1 Peter 1:10-12)
 4. The word for “crown” indicates the crown of victory.
 - C. Furthermore, this woman was experiencing the pains of labor as she waited for the birth of her child.
 1. This passage causes many to think of the virgin Mary, but she is not described this way in Scripture and does not fit the symbolism.
 2. Others suggest this woman is the Jewish nation, but they rejected Jesus as the Christ and sought to crucify Him.
 3. Some suggest she is the church, but Jesus established the church – not the other way around.
 4. This woman is the faithful remnant who, through the ages of time, labored for God and against Satan in hope of redemption (Micah 4:10; 5:2-3; Isaiah 66:7-8).
 5. Yet, faithful Christians are also represented by this woman, for they are also God’s remnant (cf. vs. 17; Hebrews 9:15; 11:40).
 - D. As John viewed the woman, another sign appeared – a great red dragon.
 1. He is identified as Satan (vs. 9).
 2. He is great – meaning, powerful and wielding mighty influence.
 3. He is red – symbolizing bloodshed and murder (cf. John 8:44).
 4. He has seven heads – indicating fullness of intellect or wisdom (craftiness in deception) (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:3).
 5. He has ten horns – symbolizing complete power, though limited to the earthly realm (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).

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Revelation 12:1-17

6. He wears seven crowns – representing royalty or rule (*these are not crowns of victory, but crowns of rule*).
 - E. The dragon's power is shown by his casting down of 1/3 of the stars with his tail.
 1. This harkens back to Satan's rebellion against God and the angels who joined him (cf. 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6).
 2. Yet, it probably has reference to Daniel's vision of the oppression of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes (Daniel 8:10, 24).
 3. In other words, Satan would cast down some of God's faithful by persecution.
 - F. The dragon's purpose is shown by his attention to the woman's child.
 1. Satan has tried to destroy God's faithful and thwart God's plan of salvation from the Garden of Eden.
 2. Later, he will continue this agenda by persecuting the church.
 3. But now, his focus is on destroying the woman's child – Jesus.
 - a. Death of the children by Herod (Matthew 2:13-16)
 - b. Temptation of Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11)
 - c. Crucifixion of Jesus (Luke 22:3; John 13:27)
 - G. Yet, this woman gave birth to a mighty man who ascended to rule over His kingdom.
 1. This verse is not limited to Bethlehem.
 2. The emphasis is on a man child – Jesus was a valiant warrior who would fight and defeat the dragon.
 3. He would rule with a rod of iron, the standard of truth.
 4. He ascended to God, not for His protection from the dragon, but to rule as King of kings and Lord of lords.
 - H. Since the kingdom of Christ now exists, the faithful remnant come into it and flee into the wilderness for protection from God.
- II. The Dragon Wars with Michael (12:7-12)
- A. Before finding out what happened to the woman, John was presented with a vision of the great spiritual battle against Satan.
 1. The reader must keep in mind the symbolic nature of the book.
 2. This is not a literal war that took place in the ancient past, leading to Satan's being cast out of Heaven.
 - a. That may have happened (Cf. 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6).
 - b. However, it does not fit the context of this passage.
 - B. The symbolism is meant to convey the true nature of Satan – as a defeated opponent.
 1. Michael is mentioned four times in Scripture (Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9).
 2. For all the fear inspired by the sight of a great, red dragon, Satan was defeated by one of God's angels.
 3. The place that Satan and his angels had in heaven – meaning, their power and rule over others – was no more.
 4. As the church learned about the persecution the Devil would bring upon them, they needed to remember that he would not win.
 - C. The dragon is identified clearly in verse 9.
 1. He is the serpent (cf. Genesis 3).
 2. He is the Devil – *accuser, slanderer*
 3. He is Satan – *adversary, enemy, opponent*

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- 4. He is a deceiver (cf. 1 Tim. 2:14)
 - D. The result of this spiritual battle is certain – the devil is defeated.
 - 1. The conflict between the Persians and the Jews was physical, but it also had a spiritual component (cf. Daniel 10:12-13).
 - 2. In that battle, God was victorious and His purpose confirmed.
 - 3. In the battle between Rome and the church (or the world and the Christian), Satan is still defeated (cf. John 12:31; 16:11; Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8).
 - E. Thus, a loud voice from Heaven declared the victory of God over Satan.
 - 1. Salvation was made available to the world.
 - 2. The strength and power of God was proven by His faithful keeping of His promises.
 - 3. The kingdom of God was established.
 - 4. The authority of Christ was proven.
 - 5. Satan's power to accuse was destroyed by the blood of Christ.
 - 6. This victory over Satan was accomplished by the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus.
 - F. Though this victory of salvation is available to everyone, it is realized only by those who are faithful to the Lord.
 - 1. They overcome by the blood of the Lamb.
 - 2. They overcome by remaining faithful to their confession of faith.
 - 3. They overcome by being willing to die for the cause of Christ.
 - G. There is rejoicing in the heavens because of this victory.
 - 1. The word "heavens" is plural because it stands for all of the saved.
 - 2. Some had died and entered into eternity.
 - 3. Others were still living, but in "heavenly places" in the church (cf. Ephesians 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10).
 - H. In contrast, there is woe for those who dwell on the earth and in the sea.
 - 1. This indicates the realm of Satan's activity.
 - 2. Though he is defeated, he still works in the world in an effort to destroy the church and the lives of men.
 - 3. The sea often symbolizes the "sea of humanity" or the mass of society.
 - 4. The earth may stand for the unregenerate world, the worldly-minded who become tools of the devil.
 - I. Because of his defeat, Satan is filled with great wrath and will use what little time he has to bring havoc upon the world.
- III. The Dragon Persecutes the Woman (12:13-17)
- A. The primary focus of Satan's wrath is God's faithful remnant, the church.
 - 1. "Since the man child is beyond Satan's power to attack, the dragon seeks to hurt the child by persecuting the woman who gave Him birth" (Homer Hailey).
 - 2. To understand who the woman is, one simply needs to ask, "Who has Satan persecuted?"
 - B. Though the devil sought to destroy the church, God protected her.
 - 1. The imagery recalls the deliverance of Israel from Egypt (cf. Exodus 19:4; Deuteronomy 32:11; Psalm 36:7; Exodus 23:20; Isaiah 40:31).
 - 2. God carried them on eagle's wings to a place prepared for them.

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3. In a real sense, the church exists in the wilderness – separate from the world.
- C. This period of persecution would not last forever, for it is limited by God (cf. vs. 6; 11:2-3).
- D. Satan would try to sweep the church away with a flood of error and lies.
- E. However, the faithful would not be deceived and the earth would swallow up the devil's lies.
 1. This symbolizes an important distinction between the world and the church.
 2. The world "eats up" the lies of Satan.
 3. Thus, the church stands in stark contrast to the error and wickedness in the world.
 4. But, when the church begins to compromise, she becomes like them and is swept away with the deceptions of Satan.
- F. Because He could not defeat the Christ or His church, Satan turned his attacks upon the individual Christians.
- G. Now, they would face severe persecution on an individual basis, simply for living in obedience to God's commandments.
- H. Thankfully, victory was assured if they would remain faithful, even unto death.