

Dealing with the Deceptive Dragon

Revelation 12:1-9

Put yourself in the sandals of the Apostle John for a moment. On the island of Patmos, his attention was drawn to wondrous signs in the sky¹. There he could see a dramatic display of gripping realities, past, present and future. As we read Revelation 12, we see a conflict both divine and devilish. Filled with spiritual realities about eternal destinies, it includes practical victories for you and me. For here we learn how the Lord God Almighty will deal the deceptive dragon, the Devil, to introduce Christ, the Conquering King.

Beginning with chapter 1 and proceeding through the first 11 chapters, John wrote down The Revelation. This is The Revelation of Jesus Christ and, as we have learned, it is sometimes mysterious. But according to Revelation 10:7, when the seventh trumpet sounded, the mystery would begin to draw to a close. In Revelation 11:15, the seventh angel blew his trumpet; this announced the beginning of the end, a significant turning point in this Revelation.

This vision in the sky features a woman, resplendent in the brightness of the Sun with the Moon beneath her feet. She wears a crown of 12 stars. She is expecting a child and travails with labor pains to bring forth a son. And this is no ordinary child. This is the One who will rule the nations with a rod of iron. Yet for a time, He will ascend to the throne of God in Heaven. While the vulnerable woman labored to bring forth this Child, she was threatened by a dragon. This royal monstrosity, a great red dragon, watches the woman closely; he is determined to devour the child at the moment of birth. No mere mythical being, this deceptive dragon convinces a third of the angels in Heaven to join his emerging conspiracy. These symbolic figures illustrate the long war against God. It is a war on two fronts: Heaven and Earth. Those angelic disciples of the dragon are cast to the earth to do his evil bidding. They are at work in the wicked kingdoms of the world at this very moment. Of course, this is a terrifying reality for humanity today. But as verse 7 tells us, this conflict will lead to a battle unlike any other – a War in Heaven.

How will the wicked kingdoms of the earth respond to the sounding of this 7th trumpet? Revelation 11:18 tells us, **“And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou should give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and should destroy those which destroy the earth.”** In Revelation 12:1-9, the chief destroyer, the Devil, appears prominently. According to verse 9, it is he who is presently deceiving the whole world. But the last part of Revelation presents his ultimate downfall as if it were in slow motion.

Revelation chapter 12 is significant in the same way as Matthew chapter 4. Both chapters place the Devil's methods in the spotlight. In both cases, Satan is trying to destroy the Savior of the world. In Matthew 4, Jesus showed us how to resist the Devil, knowing that he will flee from us. Revelation 12 includes the prophetic record of tribulation saints who follow their Lord's pattern. In this evening's message, we will examine that pattern more closely around our Lord's Table. For now, suffice it to say that the Devil can be resisted by Christ's disciples. Christ's followers in the Tribulation will overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony.

The Characters in History and Prophecy

The Woman

The Woman in Labor and Giving Birth: **“And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: and she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered... and she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.”** (Revelation 12:1-2, 5)

Various guesses have been made about the identity of the woman. But the fact that she births the One who will rule with a rod of iron narrows the possibilities. Through whom would the Messiah come?

Mary, an Israelite, the mother of Jesus, is nowhere exalted in Scripture, as the woman is in verses 1-2.ⁱⁱ From the following passages, we can show that the woman in Revelation 12:1-2, 5 is Israel. This imagery springs from the dream given to Joseph in [Genesis 37:9-10](#). In that God-given vision, the family of Jacob (who became Israel) was pictured as the sun, moon and stars. In [Isaiah 26:17-18](#), Israel pictures a woman in labor; [Micah 4:10](#) does the same. This is the nation, longing in agony for their promised Messiah. But Israel is forced to testify, **“We have not brought any deliverance in the earth.”** In other words, Israel could save no one; Israel and the waiting world desperately needed a Savior.

A small hint as to the identity of the woman appears in [Revelation 11:19](#) with the words “the ark of the covenant.” That symbol points to God’s covenants and promises to Israel. The Apostle Paul, who was so burdened for his own people described them as **“...Israelites; to whom pertains the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;”** (Romans 9:4). Our word “matrix” comes from the Latin word for “womb.” From this matrix – from this womb – would come the One who will rule the world.

The Woman Fleeing from the Devil: Verse 6 describes a future event involving Israel. **“And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared of God that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days”** (Revelation 12:6). The people of Israel will flee from the Devil. According to [verse 13](#), when he is cast to the earth, the Devil will persecute the people of Israel. In a future message, we will learn more about Israel’s escape. For now it is important to notice the duration of this tribulation: 1260 days, which corresponds to the 3 ½ years prophesied in other passages as **“a time, times and half a time”** (See [Daniel 12:7](#) and [Revelation 12:14](#)).

The Man Child

“And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne” (Revelation 12:5). The references to God’s Anointed One, who will rule with a rod of iron, are unmistakable in [Psalm 2:9](#) and [Revelation 19:15](#). Verse 5 describes the birth of Jesus Christ and His role as the final ruler over the world. In the meantime, it describes His ascension to His Father’s throne in Heaven. We studied the Ascension as depicted in [Psalm 47:5](#) in a message entitled, **“God is Gone Up With A Shout”**ⁱⁱⁱ John Walvoord wrote, “There is no good reason for not identifying the man-child as Christ and interpreting the drama of verse 5 as the panorama of his birth, life, and ascension. The fact that he is caught up not only to God but to ‘his throne’ is another indication that Christ is intended.”^{iv} This is our Lord and Savior. Ephesians 2:13 describes the believer’s relationship with Him as follows: **“But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”** ([Ephesians 2:13](#)). As we continue through Revelation 12, we shall see just how precious the blood of Christ is to all believers.

The Red Dragon and his angels

“And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born” (Revelation 12:3-4).

In verse 9, this dragon is identified: **“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world...”** This is the serpent who deceived Eve, according to [2 Corinthians 11:3](#). In Eden, he appeared as a subtle serpent. But in this Revelation, the mask is off. He is revealed as a monstrous and terrifying dragon. God made people in His image; Satan made evil in his image. Being red may be a symbol of violence and bloodshed. He has 7 heads and 10 horns and wears 7 crowns. These images speak of his political authority over this world. The Devil’s beast (the Antichrist) is introduced with the same description in [Revelation 13:1](#).

What is meant by the Devil’s drawing a third part of the stars after him? In [Job 38:7](#), the angels are called “the morning stars” which sang together near the time of the Creation. Remember the number of godly angels in [Revelation 5:11](#)? It’s “10 thousand times 10 thousand” (innumerable to us). Consider that this number is only two-thirds of the original number. Where are the other third? They are the demons doing the Devil’s bidding today. Among these fallen angels are those “in chains of darkness” ([2 Peter 2:4](#), [Jude 6](#)).

Verse 4 explains that the Devil tried to destroy the woman’s Child. We know that Satan’s emissary, Herod the Great, tried to destroy Jesus after He was born ([Matthew 2:1-18](#)).

The (archangel) Michael and his angels

Verse 7 describes God’s army: Michael and his angels. In [Jude 9](#), Michael is called “the archangel.” Michael’s appearance here is probably the same as described in [Revelation 12:1](#).

The Conflict

There was War in heaven. **“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him** (Revelation 12:7-9). Judging by what occurs in the next few verses in Revelation 12, this is probably the same event described in Daniel 12: **“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which stands for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time:”** ([Daniel 12:1](#)).^v (Some think that the phrase “Jacob’s trouble” in [Jeremiah 30:7](#) refers to this time.) When he proudly demanded more honor, Satan had been cast out of heaven. This happened sometime between Genesis 2 and 3. In [Luke 10:18](#), Jesus said, **“I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.”** Using the King of Tyre as a symbol of Satan, the prophet described Satan’s fall in ([Ezekiel 28:11-15](#)). [Isaiah 14:12-15](#) described Satan’s “Five ‘I will’s” and his ultimate fall. Through the ages, Satan has still had the ability to make accusations before God’s throne (see [Job 1:6-7](#); [2:1-2](#)). But Revelation 12:9 prophesies that the Devil will be cast to the earth – ending his ability to make accusations before God’s throne. In a future message, we shall see that he comes to know that his time is short.

Applications of This Message: How could you and I put this passage into practice?

1. Let us praise the God who reveals – who communicates with us. He gave John that vision in the sky that covers a significant part of human history.

2. Praise the Lord who has unrolled His revelation gradually to us. As we have studied in this message, John's vision takes us back to passages in Genesis, Job, Psalms, Isaiah, Daniel, Matthew and earlier in Revelation. How would you apply this? Read your Bible – all of it! As you read, watch for the connections.

3. Take every opportunity to be around your brothers and sisters in Christ. Why? To remind them of what God has said, and be reminded by them. Exhort each other daily so that no one is hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Just yesterday, in the men's breakfast, one of the men reminded me of something I knew, but had forgotten. If this can happen to pastors who labor in the Word all the time, couldn't this happen to you? Be faithful to the gatherings of your congregation and come ready to encourage.

4. Understand the place of national Israel in God's prophetic revelation. Thank the Lord for His chosen people, and do everything in your power to win them to the Lord (Romans 11:11).

5. Take time to consider what the Bible teaches about spiritual warfare, using Revelation 12. If you are in the middle of a battlefield, wouldn't you want to know what is going on and how it is affecting you and your loved ones?

6. The Devil is deceiving the whole world. Study what the Bible teaches about the Devil (the Slanderer) who is also called Satan (Adversary). In this evening's message, we will carefully evaluate how to overcome the Devil. That old Satanic serpent, the Devil, is deceiving the whole world. How is he deceiving you? Have you believed his slander about a brother or sister in Christ? Have you not felt the sharp talons of his terrible slander? Have you given up because you were slandered? Do you assume things to be true about your fellow believers – but those things are actually lies suggested to you by the Slanderer? Do you believe that you are perfectly justified in doing what you know God says is wrong? If so, can you not see how the Devil has deceived you? *Sneaky Satan snickers (accuser that he is), when you believe his subtle lies, instead of truth God gives. Brothers may offend you (saved sinners that we are) but this by no means justifies the hardness of your heart. Don't obey the Devil; obey God's Word instead. For Satan lies and he divides our fellowship in shreds.*

7. Walk in the light and in close fellowship with the members of your congregation. **"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin."** (1 John 1:7)

8. Rejoice that Christ, the Mighty Conqueror, will defeat the deceptive dragon, the Devil.

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¹ Translated as "heaven" in this passage, the Greek word [ouranos] (from which the planet gets its name), is translated as "air" in Matthew 8:20 and "sky" in Matthew 16:2-3.

² On one occasion, when someone tried to exalt Mary, His mother, Jesus said, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (see Luke 11:27-28).

³ "God is Gone Up with a Shout," a message from Psalm 47:5 accessed at <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=481693250>

⁴ John Walvoord, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ," Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1966 pp. 190-191

⁵ We studied this passage in Daniel together in a message entitled, "Your Tragic End? Or Your New Beginning?" based on Daniel 11:45-12:3. That message is available at <https://www.cbcbfindlay.org/your-tragic-end-or-your-new-beginning/>