

A SERIES THROUGH THE REVELATION

Revelation 12—The Cosmic War, And Earth's Implications / 6.23.22

I. INTRODUCTION (Revelation 12)

- A. **Revelation 12-13** represent the heart of the Revelation, not mainly because of placement, but because they describe to us the unseen cosmic war in heaven, that's played out in the war on earth, the one that's seen.
- B. Within **Revelation 12-13** the curtain is pulled back that separates the heavenly realm, and we are able to see the great spiritual battle that's happening in heavenly places. It's here that we see the suffering on earth, the hardship, the pain, the struggle, and the present tribulation isn't primarily because God is mad at us, but because our adversary is standing before God day and night accusing us before Him.
- C. Revelation 12 is the Gospel's answer to who has the victory, God or satan? These chapters give us a glimpse into the war of all wars, the cosmic war, and its earthly implications. Things are not as they seem, meaning what's happening down here (earth), is a direct result of what's happening up there (heaven).

II. THE DRAGON'S RAGE AGAINST GOD'S MESSIAH (Revelation 12:1-6)

- A. **Revelation 12:1-2** *"Now a great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth."*

- 1. John opens by stating that a great sign appeared in heaven, which was a woman. We have to keep in mind that John is clear, this woman is a sign, meaning that she's pointing to something, not that it's an actual woman. These opening 5 verses (**12:1-5**) are giving us a historical take on God's story, so that we are able to make sense of satan's present rage against God's family.
 - a. The Women—This woman is a sign/symbol for national/ethnic Israel, pregnant with promise of God's Seed, the promised Messiah (**Gen. 3:15**).
 - b. Clothed With The Sun, The Moon Under Her Feet, On Her Head A Garland Of Twelve Stars—This is an indirect reference to **Genesis 37:9-11**, where Joseph had an audacious dream that his father, his mother, and his brothers would bow down before him and serve him. The sun speaks of Jacob (his father), the moon speaks of Rachel (his mother), and the eleven stars (his brothers), leavening him as the 12th star.
 - 1. It's clear, God is committed to the national identity of Israel throughout the Revelation as seen already in **Revelation 7:1-8**, here in **Revelation 12**, again in **Revelation 14**, and lastly in **Revelation 21:12**.
 - c. Being With Child, She Cried Out In Labor And In pain To Give Birth—Israel's picture throughout much of the Old Testament is that of a woman in labor, in travail, feeling persecution for the birth of this promised Child (**Isa. 13:8; 21:3; 26:17-18; 61:7-8; 66:7; Jer. 4:31; 13:21; 22:23**).
 - 1. This event is a fulfilled event at the time of John's writing, it's looking back at a past event, just as many other things in the Revelation are future events that have yet to be fulfilled in the future.
 - 2. This word for pain occurs several times in the New Testament to speak of acute pain, either mental (**Matt. 8:29; 2nd Pet. 2:8**), or physical (**Matt. 8:6**), but only here is it used to speak of childbirth. This word is closer to torment, a serious type of ongoing affliction.
 - 3. Come on, the promise of a Child was in the garden in **Genesis 3:15**, and it's fulfillment is some thousands of years later. Israel alone gets to speak of a prolonged labor.

- B. Revelation 12:3-4** *“And another sign appeared in heaven; behold a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them down to the earth. And the dragon stood before the women who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.”*
1. Well, it’s clear, John is looking at the second sign, which is a symbol for satan, which is clearly spelled out in the whole of this book (**12:9; 20:2**). This sign would’ve taken John’s readers to the sea monsters that appear throughout the Old Testament with Leviathan, or Behemoth, two monsters that were representative of chaos and evil (**Job 3:8; 40:15-41:26; Ps. 74:14; Isa. 27:1; Job 40:18**).
 - a. **A Great Fiery Red Dragon**—This dragon is great (fierce, powerful) and red, like the color of blood, like we saw in **Revelation 6:4**, the only other time this word appears in the New Testament (Pyrros).
 - b. **Having Seven Heads and Ten Horns**—Seven speaks of completeness/fullness and heads speak of authority. Horns speak of strength, just as it was pictured of Christ in Revelation 5:6. This strong dragon, has complete authority, strength and is driven by bloodshed.
 1. Now it’s not unlimited strength, it’s whatever God gives him because he’s never operating independent of God. Remember all the, “*And it was GIVEN to him*” verses that we’ve looked at in the past weeks?
 - c. **And Seven Diadems On His Head**—These diadems are a symbol of his wealth, and material resources. These heads, horns and diadems appear at length in **Revelation 13**, and **17**, so we will cover them fuller there.
 - d. **His Tail Drew A Third Of The Stars Of Heaven**—This is where we see the completeness of his delegated authority, or given authority as he’s able to take 1/3 of the stars (fallen angels) of heaven with him.
 - e. **The Dragon Stood Before The Women Who Was Ready To Give Birth, To Devour Her Child As Soon As It Was Born**—The dragon’s animosity is primarily with the women’s Child, not with the women, but because He can’t get to the Child, he will take out his aggression on the women.
 1. We’ve seen satan’s rage towards the women’s unborn Child throughout the whole of the Old Testament and at the start of the New Testament;
 - i. *Instances of his hostility surfaced in Cain’s murder of Abel (Gen. 4:8), the corrupting of the line of Seth (Gen. 6:1-12), attempted rapes of Sarah (Gen. 12:10-20; 20:1-8), and Rebekah (Gen. 26:1-18), Rebekah’s plan to cheat Esau out of his birthright and the consequent enmity of Esau against Jacob (Gen. 27), the murder of the male children in Egypt (Ex. 1:15-22), attempted murders of David (1st Sam. 18:10-11), queen Athaliah’s attempt to destroy the royal seed (2nd Chron. 22:10), Haman’s attempt to slaughter the Jews (Esther 3-9), inconsistent attempts of Israelites to murder their own children for sacrificial purposes (Lev. 18:21; 2nd Kings 16:3; 2nd Chron. 28:3; Ps. 106:37-38; Ezek. 16:20). The attack of Herod against the children of Bethlehem (Matt. 2:16), and many other incidents during Jesus’ earthly life, including his temptation, typify the ongoing attempt of the dragon to devour the woman’s child once he was born. The most direct attempt was, of course, in the crucifixion of Christ.” -Robert Thomas, The Revelation Vol. 2, Pg. 125*
 2. “*We are never to underestimate the power of evil—on earth is not his (satan’s) equal, says Martin Luther—but neither are we to overrate the power of evil.*” Darrell W Johnson, Discipleship On The Edge, Pg. 197

3. How wild, here we are back in **Genesis 3**. The dragon, that serpent of old, a woman, mention of war, enmity between them, between her Seed and him, and mention of her seed one day crushing satan's head.

C. Revelation 12:5 *"She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne."*

1. So far the woman has been a sign, and the dragon has been a sign, but this male Child is not a sign. The woman points to something beyond herself. The dragon points to something beyond himself. But the Child does not. The Child is the reality, not a sign, not a shadow of something to come, but the substance.
 - a. We will not find a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet. And we won't find a dragon with seven heads and ten horns. But we will find a male Child, a Son.
2. It's clear, this Child is the Messiah, Jesus Christ Himself. We know this because of the promise made to this Child that He will rule all nations with a rod of iron, speaking of the prophecy from **Psalm 2**.
3. We learn from **Psalm 2:9**, and **Revelation 19:15** that Jesus alone is the One ruling over the nations with a rod of iron, though some measure of power is given to the Church to co-labor with Him, at least to the overcomer in **Revelation 2:26-27**. This **Psalm 23** rod isn't made of wood, it's made of iron (unbreakable).
4. And Her Child Was Caught Up To God And His Throne—The idea that He was caught up speaks of an animal snatching up their prey (**Jn. 10:12**), or like Phillip who was caught up/translated (**Acts 8:39**), and also of the Church when she will be caught up (**1st Thess. 4:17**), or Paul when he went into the 3rd heaven in **2nd Corinthians 12**.
 - a. This isn't Christ taken into the wilderness by His parents, because this ascension is directly to the throne of God. But why leave out the life of Christ, and go simply from birth, to ascension? Because this is the reason He's come; to rule all things (**Jn. 18:37**; **1st Tim. 3:16**).

D. Revelation 12:6 *"Then the women fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days."*

1. With Christ taken up to the Father, satan no longer could attack Him, so he has to shift tactics.
 2. This flight that happens here occurs chronologically after this war that's about to happen in the preceding verses of **Revelation 12:7-12**, and the women's flight into the wilderness is given more treatment in **Revelation 12:13-17**.
 3. We know this flight is more than just Joseph and Mary running, or a historical time period in which God's family has had to run, solely because of the time frame listed (1,260).
 4. Jesus spoke of this flight in **Matthew 24:15-48**; **Mark 13:14-22** when He talked about a Jewish flight after the abomination of desolation, which appears in the middle of the week, at the 3.5-year mark.
 5. Look, this wilderness, this desolate landscape which will be present during this time, will be for the Church, for the family of God, for the Jewish people a wilderness of refuge, a paradise of sorts in the midst of unprecedented and unparalleled devastation. We know this because of where the harlot emerges, in this same wilderness (**Rev. 17:3**).
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- a. **Song of Songs 4:6-8 and Song of Songs 8:14.** Those mountains of leopards, and lions, are now mountains of spices, and fragrance. What's changed? The mountains? No, they are still filled with lions and leopards. It's her that's changed, it's her that's been transformed, now seeing the desolate landscape, and the wild animals as something that brings forth the fragrance of Christ in our lives.

III. THE EXPULSION OF THE DRAGON FROM HEAVEN (Revelation 12:7-12)

- A. Revelation 12:7-9** *“And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought with the dragon and the dragon, and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the devil and satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”*
1. Well, this vision has now taken us back to the pre-flight of the woman, to further explain the rage of satan against the woman. This is a second falling, because satan has already fallen, which is why he was able to pursue the Male Child historically.
 2. This war is an end-time event, an event that has yet to happen. This war is between Michael and the dragon. Michael is the Old Testament guardian angel of Israel, one of two archangels in the Bible that are named, so this has something specifically with God's people (**Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1**).
 - a. *“The war in heaven is won through an event on earth, through the birth of the Child on earth. The war is won through the life of the Child. The war is won through the preaching, teaching, and healing ministry of the Child. The war is won through the crucifixion of the Child. The war is won through the resurrection of the Child. The war is won through the ascension of the Child to the throne.”* Darrel Johnson, Discipleship On The Edge, Pg. 223
 3. Through the Daniel position, laboring from the finished work of Christ, the Church will move into the Daniel position, and through prayer the devil, or what Daniel calls the Prince of Persia will be thrown down to the earth. The dragon is not victorious. God will no longer listen to his accusations.
 4. To make certain of who we are talking about, John says his name four different ways;
 1. The serpent of old—This is his subtly, how he slides into our lives, sneaky, undetected, unannounced (**Gen. 3:1; 2nd Cor. 11:3**).
 2. The devil—this means defamer, slander, accuser, the one who accuses falsely. This is his desire to separate God's family from God Himself.
 3. The one called satan—This phrase speaks of a superhuman adversary, who inspired David's census, who accused Job, and Joshua the high priest.
 4. The one who deceives the whole planet—This speaks of his uncanny ability to deceive humanity, to mislead humanity. And who does he deceive, the whole earth, influencing the systems of the earth to serve himself.
 5. The Bible defines heaven in three levels. The 3rd heaven speaks of the immediate presence of God (**2nd Corinthians 12:1-6**). The second heaven speaks of the atmosphere, the air, the unseen spiritual realm (**Eph. 2:2; 6:12**). And the first heaven speaks of earth, the sea, where we live (**Rev. 21:1**).
 - a. Satan has had one fall currently (**Ez. 28:13-19; Isa. 14:12-15; Lk. 10:8**). It was a fall from the 3rd heaven, from the immediate presence of God. This fall cast him down to the second heaven, or the atmosphere, where he is ruling and reigning today. But there is coming a second fall, where he will be cast down from the second heaven, and come to the first heaven, or earth itself, thus creating an open heaven.

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- B. Revelation 12:10** *“Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren who accused them before our God day and night has been cast down.*
1. Well, this purging of satan from the 2nd heaven rightly elicits a hymn from an unknown voice in heaven, shouting the worth, the majesty and power of God.
 2. This phrase “cast down” appears 6 times in regard to satan being thrown down, or cast down (**Rev. 12:9, 9, 9, 10, 12, 13**). Beloved, this is good news, and John, 6 times here, loves announcing it.
 3. Satan roles as the accuser of the brethren will end, but his role as the persecutor of the brethren will only intensify because he no longer has a place in heaven.
- C. Revelation 12:11** *“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony and they did not love their lives unto death.*
1. So, the war has been won through the birth, life, death, resurrection and accension of the Child, but how does the Church stand, how do the people of God stand? We’ll, we overcome satan three primary ways;
 - a. We Fight The Flood Of Accusation By The Blood Of The Lamb—Christ’s work on Calvary speaks so much louder than our guilt, our sins, our past, or the condemnation that comes our way.
 1. Just like Joshua in Zachariah 4, he was guilty, being accused, the sin was correct, punishment was in order, but God cleansed him, washed him and gave him clean robes.
 2. Satan does accuse us, our sins are great, but the Cross of Christ is greater, this is why we boast in the Cross. This is why we make much of the Cross. This is why we cling to the Cross, because Calvary is stronger than any accusation.
 3. Martin Luther once threw his ink blot at the devil saying, *“I’m baptized into Christ.”* And J. B. Phillips rightly said, *“Who is in a position to condemn? Only Christ, and Christ died for us, Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us! So, dragon, get out of here!”* -Darrell Johnson, Discipleship On The Edge, Pg. 227
 - b. Against The Flood Of Deceit, We Overcome Him By Seeking With Our Whole Being To Know The Truth, To Speak The Truth, To Walk In The Truth—The way we overcome satan is by our testimony, not only our personal story of faith, but the truth of God as it is in Christ. The only counter to deceit is truth, the truth of God’s Word.
 1. This means that we are reaching for the truth of God in the big areas, as much as we are reaching for them in the “small” areas. It’s a life clinging to the apostolic deposit (**1st Timothy 6:20**).
 - c. Lastly, We Overcome By Declaring The Gospel To The Dragon and To Ourselves—Death has been robbed of its finality for the follower of Christ. We steal the dragons thunder when we are fearless in the face of death, because without that, what else does he have (**Heb. 2:15**).
- D. Revelation 12:12** *“Therefore rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! Woe, to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you having great wrath because he knows that he has a short time.*
1. At the conclusion of this heavenly hymn, there’s a combination of rejoicing, and warning. It’s here, at the Church’s perfected state, unto and greater than **Acts 2** that God is going to send satan down to the earth as a formidable foe for the nations.
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2. But look, even the warning can't drown out the rejoicing. Even in the face of martyrdom, suffering, and pain, there is great rejoicing among both heaven and God's family.
3. Friends, this is what John is wanting us to see, what John himself was learning. The world is filled with evil because the devil is furious. The devil believes the Gospel proclamation that his time is short. He's pushed into a corner, and all his planning, all his scheming are coming to bare in a short season (3.5 years).

IV. THE DRAGONS PURSUIT OF THE WOMAN (Revelation 12:13-17)

A. Revelation 12:13 *"Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the women who gave birth to the Male Child."*

1. We see here that the suffering of the Church isn't a sign of her defeat, but of satan's. Because he's no longer able to touch the Christ, or attempt to, the Baby having slipped through his fingers once again, the only thing left is God's family.
2. Since he can't get the child, he goes after the His mother, Israel/the Church, the family of God. We learned about her flight in **Revelation 12:6**, but now we know why, because the dragon has rage towards her. Because He can't touch her Son, he's trying to afflict her Son, by afflicting His mother.

a. **Acts 9:1-5**

B. Revelation 12:14 *"But the women was given two wings like a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time from the presence of the serpent."*

1. Just as it was said in Revelation 12:6, this flight into the wilderness is successful because of God. The dragon's rage is no match against the women's God-given powers, and God's miraculous intervention in her life.
 - a. **She's Given Two Wings Of A Great Eagle To Fly**—This speaks of expansive strength, and rapid flight. It's an echo once again of Israel's previous deliverance from Egypt (**Ex. 19:4; Deut. 32:11; Isa. 40:31; Ps. 91:1-4**).
 1. The purpose of the wings is to enable her to "fly" into the wilderness, to her place. Once again, God's leading national Israel, from slavery to freedom, through a wilderness, by pressure from an ungodly end-time Pharaoh, and his demonic horde to be taken care of by God, just like Israel of old was overseen by God in the wilderness, a place of divine encounter and transformation.
 2. Beloved, it's this same wilderness that Moses ran into, and was stripped for 40 years by God, before he was called in the burning bush. Stripped, humbled, and prepared to lead God's family, Moses heads back into that same wilderness with Israel for 40 years, so that God can do with a nation, what he did with a man.
 3. It's here in this wilderness, that God Himself has prepared for Israel that He will nourish her like He did Elijah, and Israel with Manna from heaven. This is a critical feeding because at this time nobody will be able to buy or sell. Beloved, God made a promise to this people to preserve them, and He will see them through, even in their rebellion.
- b. **For A Time, Times and Half A Time**—In this chapter alone we are given two of the three time frames that speak of this 7 years of tribulation, or the 3.5 years of Great Tribulation;

1. **Revelation 12:6 (11:3)** –1,260 days = 3.5 years **Revelation 12:14**—Time, Times and
Half A Time=3.5 years (Time = 1 year, Times = 2 years, Half a time = ½ year) **Revelation**
11:2; 13:5—For 42 months = 3.5 years

C. **Revelation 12:15-16** *“So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the women, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.”*

1. Well, it's here that the devil himself, not demons, or other pawns show's his hand. His goal is to steal, kill and destroy. It's not clear here if this is speaking of literal water, or water as in a massive army, like the vast number of soldiers pursuing Israel. It could mean either or (**Jeremiah 46:7-8; 47:2-3**).
2. It's not clear exactly what's meant here, but whatever happens, Israel finds herself an unlikely ally in the earth. Many see this as an earthquake that opens up and swallows either literal water, or physical enemies, like soldiers. This phraseology is used for the Exodus from Egypt (**Ex. 15:12**) and for the death of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (**Num. 16:28-33; 26:10; Deut. 11:6; Ps. 106:17**).
3. Whatever happens, the earth steps in to serve God's chosen people during their flight into the wilderness from the presence of the dragon.

D. **Revelation 12:17** *“And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”*

1. The divine protection of Israel only further enrages satan, and sends him chasing down the rest of the family. The dragon had to redirect his anger from the Son to the women when the Son escaped his clutches. This increased his rage.
2. He lost his place in heaven, angering him even more. At this point the women has escaped to a place of refuge, leaving him only the woman's remaining seed to vent his fury on. It's here that we see both Israel and the Gentile Church going through the tribulation, together.