

**Revelation 12:1-12**  
**The Woman and The Dragon**

Wizard of Oz – Pay NO attention to the man behind the curtain.

The Bible – PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO WHAT IS BEHIND THE SPIRITUAL CURTAIN

What are the causes of the difficulties faced by believers? How far back do you want to go? How many layers of the onion do you want to peel away? How long do you want to pull on the loose thread?

The biblical narrative pulls the thread or peels the layers as it explains that there are things happening that we do not see. There is a spiritual reality that operates outside the bounds of the natural order. This passage in Rev 12 describes THE STORY BEHIND ALL STORIES.

We are aware that the Pendulum tends to swing when it comes to our view of spiritual warfare  
Some tend to ignore it, while others get overly sensitized to it and see a demon behind every bush.

Overarching application of Revelation (which is not always easy)-  
Revelation is not always as easy for us to apply as it was for the original audience. We don't face the same challenges that much of the church has faced for 2000 years. If you are yearning for more practical application from this book, then you might pray for persecution. But be careful what you pray for.

Revelation does tell us that the interruptions and hardships that come your way may not be the result of spiritual warfare or the work of the Devil i.e the car won't start, a flat tire, can't find a good parking spot at the store, job loss, health issue, troubled relationship, loud kids, nagging parents, etc.  
While those are probably NOT the work of the Devil, how we RESPOND IS A SPIRITUAL ISSUE.

Revelation is not a book on marriage, parenting, employer/employee relations, displaying grace, patience, and compassion with others, etc, **BUT REVELATION DOES GIVE THE FOUNDATION FOR WHY AND HOW WE ARE TO LIVE A LIFE OF FAITH.**

The foundation is the GOOD NEWS OF Christ AS THE LION-LAMB, the Savior-King. He rules and He reigns and as His people we are to stand firm by faith. Rev 2:10; 3:11

He has promised the crown of life to those who hold fast and are faithful until death.

He has promised His presence in our midst now and in the New Jerusalem to come. 21:22

So, when Revelation is confusing with visions and fallen angels, dragons, good angels, and scenes before the throne of God, REMEMBER that the future grace that is ours in Christ is to be laid hold of NOW by faith.  
**PIPER: The life of faith in future grace has a lively memory. It knows that all the grace we need this afternoon and forever depends on what happened in history two thousand years ago.**

While it may not always seem obvious, Revelation is all about the work of Christ and His victory. Trying to 'live the Christian' life in the nitty gritty routine of life without resting in the work of Jesus is tiring and frustrating. Last week was a great celebration of the resurrection. Now we need to embrace and abide in the Risen Christ daily. Let the past gospel events and the future grace rooted in those events seep into every corner of our minds and hearts. That happens as we are alone with God and as we gather with others in corporate worship and in small groups.

Revelation comes with this reminder: We don't always know who is behind what in this world. However, we do know that God is always in control. If we forget that, then our attempts at Christian living hampered by fear, anxiety, and our attempts to control things so that we get the life we want.

Now for chapter 12...  
Dennis Johnson...

We've reached the heart of the book of Revelation. This is not simply the midpoint of the book. It's the vision sequence that goes deepest, to the core of the conflicts and chaos that bring misery, mourning, violence, disease, pain, sorrow, and death into this sin-cursed world. Behind all this world's woes throughout human history is the power struggle between God the Creator and Satan the usurper, the God who is truth and Satan the liar, the God who gives life and Satan the murderer. The warfare wages so long because God's purpose is to conquer Satan while rescuing Satan's willing captives through the offspring of a woman who would arrive in the fullness of time to engage the ancient serpent in mortal combat.

#### The Woman, Israel

1 A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; 2 and she was with child; and she \*cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth. (Gen 37:9)

#### The Red Dragon, Satan

3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. 4 And his tail \*swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth, he might devour her child.

#### The Male Child, Christ

5 And she gave birth to a son, a male *child*, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron (Ps 2:9; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne (Acts 2:33; Rev 3:21). 6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she \*had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days (1,260).

#### The Angel, Michael

7 And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, 8 and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying,

"Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God, day and night. 11 And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. 12 For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has *only* a short time."

While the language is symbolic, John is describing something that did happen in the spiritual realm.

Baucham: Climax of Prophecy

p. 186 John's visions are not historical narrative but vehicles of the cosmic significance of the historical events...

Chapter 12 amounts to another kind of parenthesis or interlude. In the chapter John explains the origin of the persecution of the church and its tribulations in the world. Once again John pulls back to survey the entire course of history and to explain it. We have already had intimations of this, but this is the first time John lays out in a systematic way the struggle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the Evil One.

The persecution, the tribulation of the church is the manifestation in history of a spiritual battle that has been underway from the beginning of the world. Satan has been defeated by Jesus Christ, but precisely because he has been defeated, he rages against the saints. John expects that by laying bare the real cause of the church's persecution and tribulation, the followers of Christ will be nerved to withstand their tribulations and remain faithful through them. ( Dr. Rayburn)

Someone in this congregation shared with me this week: (paraphrase)

*Knowing that the real spiritual battle has been waged and won in heaven gives me the strength and grace to persevere in the midst of the trials of this life.*

THAT IS THE KEY TAKEAWAY FROM Revelation.

**v. 1-2 The Woman** – Catholic/Protestant debate i.e. Mary or the people of God (Israel-Church).

To be consistent with the rest of the chapter (v. 17), the best option seems to be that the woman represents the people of God. Every commentator I read sees the echoes of Gen 37 and the vision of Joseph where he sees the sun, moon, and stars bowing down to him. Those symbolized the family and descendants of Jacob / Israel. She appears as a ‘sign’ in Heaven. Signs point to something; in this case, the people of God.

This passage takes us back to Gen 3 and the enmity between the snake (Satan) and the seed of the woman. The mortal combat began in the Garden and it predicts that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the snake. When sin entered through the disobedience of the first couple, they left the Garden with a promise of a savior to come. The people of God became the mother waiting for the seed that would come from Israel. THE SEED = Christ. The Bible isn’t about Adam, Eve, Moses, Abraham, Ruth, Samson, David, Isaiah, Joseph, or Mary. Those are smaller stories that lead to the ultimate story of Jesus – the Seed and the Serpent.

We are used to observing the seen realm with certain narratives, and we try to organize all of reality around that narrative. Quite often this means that narratives become politicized because in a world where people are big and God is seen as small, it all becomes political. Or we create our own individual narrative, and everything becomes sucked into and organized around our narrative. We put ourselves or our agenda in the center and we quickly lose perspective on life. These smaller stories may be important, but they can’t bear the weight of being THE ORGANIZING STORY FOR ALL OF REALITY. Revelation 12 gives us the underlying ultimate story – Jesus vs the Dragon. The story is played out in warfare against the people of God in Ephesus, Sardis, Pergamum, etc as well as NYC, Paris, Beijing, and Lafayette. Only this cosmic story gets us to the bottom line of the ultimate reality.

When the gospel writers want to talk about marriage, family, suffering, morality, generosity, reconciliation, forgiveness, etc they don’t headline those topics. They headline the ultimate reality- the gospel. They come to each of those issues from a gospel perspective. And they do so because Jesus IS KING. That is the ongoing headline of Revelation. Jesus is king so stand firm in the faith as you live out these other areas.

**V 3-4 reflect what is said in v.9 about the dragon being Satan.**

While the symbols used for the dragon represent power, he is not ALL powerful. He is dangerous and we are to be on guard, but as Revelation depicts, he is limited and will be bound.

**v. 5 The child is born and is protected.** The life of Christ is telescoped – born and then taken up.

The cross may have looked like a defeat, but he defeated sin and death and all things have been put under His feet.

**v. 6 The church is beset by tribulation** for 1260 days, i.e. 3 ½ years- a symbolic numerical number used in Daniel 7,9,12 to represent a limited amount of time in which evil is permitted to exercise great influence. Used elsewhere in Revelation would seem to cover the entire period of what we call the “church age” – between the Ascension of Christ and his return.

While at times it may not seem like the church is protected, she is. God continues to give His grace and the means of grace to His people. Psalm 103 reminds us “forget none of His benefits.” Eph 1 tells us that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Those are blessings secured for us by Christ through His victory. We are headed toward the new heaven and new earth.

V. 7 Some of this serpent imagery filters into the broader culture: EX: the PBS series “I Claudius” opens with a serpent slithering across the floor.

This warfare between Michael and the dragon is a spiritual counterpart to what is happening on earth during the events of v. 1-6. This is apocalyptic language used to describe the victory of Christ and His kingdom over the Devil's kingdom. The victory of the kingdom of God was won through the life, cross, and resurrection of Christ and then in the faithful life of his saints – v. 11 – The blood of the Lamb is the basis for Christ's great victory.

V. 10 The accuser of the brethren describes a key function of Satan. He is a liar and is under wrath so he wants to bring down as many with him as he can. In making accusations he shows that he understands God's holiness, but he doesn't understand the Good News promise of the gospel – There is no condemnation for those in Christ.

Satan hates God and loves to accuse God's people. He thinks it makes God look bad.

EX: as a parent we hate it when our kids make us look bad, or vice versa.

Satan doesn't understand that in Christ, all the bad we've done has been forgiven. Satan's accusations fall on deaf ears. EX: Jesus says, “Talk to the hand, cause I'm not listening” and the hand bears the nail scarred wound from the cross.

The Devil has been stripped of his power to accuse you, so you are also stripped of your power to accuse yourself. Some of you need to stop playing the role of prosecutor in your own heart.

We all probably need to stop playing prosecutor over others – in person or online.

Because of the work of Christ, no accusation from Satan will stand but he will continue to try. That's his jam; it's all he's got. He's miserable and wants others to be as well. How do we combat his accusations?

Ex: to paraphrase Martin Luther – when the Devil makes his accusations just say, “thank you Devil for pointing out my sin because it reminds me that I have a great savior.” We have a real savior for real sin. Our sin doesn't define us; Jesus does.

APPLICATION:

Are there areas where you have let down your guard or you are giving the Devil an opening?

Eph 4:27 speaks of anger that is not dealt with is giving the devil an opportunity.

Is there anger being harbored in your heart toward a spouse, friend, child, parent, teacher, colleague, employee/ er, coach, teammate, etc. IF SO, THE TABLE is a place to deal with it. God knows anyway so be honest with yourself and with Him.

Satan falls when believers stand firm, v. 11

V. 11 perhaps the KEY VERSE FOR US AS BELIEVERS –

And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.

We'll look at this again next week, but for now we prepare our hearts for communion by recognizing that we can overcome ONLY because Christ shed his blood for us. By doing so, He overcame death and sin.

COME TO THE TABLE

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