

Revelation 12: The Woman and the Dragon

This episode between the woman and the dragon fulfills and disposes of the curse upon serpent and the enmity between the woman and the serpent because of the fall of man recorded in Genesis 3:13-16:

13 And Jehovah God said unto the woman, “What is this you have done?” And the woman said, “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.”

14 And Jehovah God said unto the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life: 15 and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed: he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

16 Unto the woman he said, “I will greatly multiply your pain and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; and your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

There are two possible symbolic meanings in the dramatic situation set between woman and the devil. In the literal story, literal man as the seed of woman will step on the serpent and that the serpent will strike the literal heel of man. However, the statement is about enmity. In this view, this symbolic meaning is that the seed of woman, Christ and his church, will crush the head of the devil which he did by resisting temptation and overcoming death. It is clear that the devil was unable to strike the heel of Christ, who rose from the dead sin free and ascended into heaven.

Paul revealed this symbolic meaning to the church at Rome in Romans 16:19-20:

19 For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I rejoice therefore over you: but I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple unto that which is evil. 20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Therefore, the offspring of the woman is the church under whose feet the God will crush Satan. The story that follows is an extension of the metaphor, taking on the characteristics of an allegory. An allegory is a story with two meanings, a literal meaning, and a symbolic meaning. The true offspring of woman are those faithful to God across the ages as identified in last verse of the chapter—Revelation 12:17:

17 And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, that keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus.

There can never be any doubt about who the seed of the woman are: they keep the commandments and hold the testimony of Jesus

Great and Wondrous Sign—the Radiant Woman

Revelation 12:1-2

Revelation 12:1-2

12 And a great sign was seen in heaven: a woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars; 2 and she was with child; and she cried out, travailing in birth, and in pain to be delivered.

12 And a great sign was seen in heaven shows that the scene John is viewing is extraordinary, especially as compared to just another sign in verse 3. *A woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars* describes the radiant woman with sun as clothing, the moon under her feet, and a crown with twelve stars. She is radiantly arrayed with all the glory and grandeur of God's creation. The crown is a victory crown (stephanos). The crowns in verse 3 of the dragon are diadems or ruling crowns (diadema). The word for the woman's crown is the same as used for the crown of thorns worn by Christ, for the crown of righteousness in 2 Timothy 4:8, and, the crown of glory in 1 Peter 5:4. The twelve stars are the saved of spiritual Israel, the New Jerusalem.

This woman is not the Virgin Mary, as some suppose, nor is she just a symbol of all women. A woman so adorned can only be the bride of Christ. The entire revelation is about Christ and his bride. The conflict between the bride and the devil has existed from the fall of man. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 11:2-3:

2 For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband that I might present you (as) a pure virgin to Christ. 3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ.

Of Christ and the church, Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:25-32:

Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; 26 that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, 27 that he might present the church to himself a glorious (church), not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. . . . 29 for no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church; 30 because we are members of his body. . . . 32 This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church.

The woman was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. By their very nature, the redeemed of all ages constitute the offspring of the beautiful woman. Revelation 7:14 describes them as "they that come of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

The woman—the bride, the pure virgin, the called out—has struggled to bring forth offspring in every generation. Her offspring are the children of God as opposed to children of the devil. In John 8:43-44, Jesus spoke of this fact as it related to the children of devil:

Why do you not understand my speech? (Even) because you cannot hear my word. 44 You are of (your) father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stands not in the truth, because there is no truth in him.

In our story, the woman is in symbolic travail and anguish. Jeremiah 4:31 captures the sense of the allegory.

31 For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail, the anguish as of her that brings forth her first child, the voice of the daughter of Zion, that gasps for breath, that spreads her hands, (saying), "Woe is me now! For my soul faints before the murderers."

Note especially how John and Jeremiah use the words murderer and murderers. The children of God of each generation from Abel to the present suffer travail as they birth the true offspring of God for the next generation.

Another Sign—the Red Dragon

Revelation 12:3-6

3 And there was seen another sign in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads seven diadems. 4 And his tail draws the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stands before the woman that is about to be delivered, that when she is delivered he may devour her child. 5 And she was delivered of a son, a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and unto his throne. 6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared of God, that there they may nourish her a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

Another sign appeared—an enormous red dragon. Another sign contrast to the great and wondrous sign. Verse 7 explains the dragon figure clearly—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan. The meaning of the word dragon, unknown in modern times, has its root meaning back in Job. In Job 41:1-13, God, through Job, described the leviathan, in a way consistent with what we now think of as dragons. The description offers a fit analogy to explain the devil as dragon:

The dragon had seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. The red dragon contrasts to the woman clothed in the sun. The seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns describe his dominion and authority. These physical characteristics convey a spiritual meaning of authority (heads) power (horns) and dominion (crowns). Ephesians 6:12 describes fully the sum of the metaphoric meaning:

12 For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual (hosts) of wickedness in the heavenly (places).

This is the power and horror of the dragon. In Daniel 7:6, Daniel says his four-headed beast is one given authority to rule. The horns, the heads, and crowns describe the power and authority the devil, and not Rome or Egypt or any other minor force. Seven is the number of fullness and 10 is the number of completeness. The use of both numbers here does not extend beyond the symbolic meaning. The dragon is an entity of full and complete power over his kingdom—the spiritual host of wickedness.

In the next chapter, the dragon gives power and dominion to the beast. While writing of crowns, heads, and horns, John gives the meaning of the symbols in Revelation 13:2:

2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as (the feet) of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his **power**, and his **throne**, and **great authority**.

The crowns, heads, and horns will always take this meaning: power, throne, and authority. Crown used here is different from the woman's crown—*stephanos*, a crown of victory. The word used here is *diadema* and is always the symbol of kingly or imperial dignity. Revelation 12:3; 13:1; 19:12 use this meaning of crown of the dragon, of the beast, and of the Word of God.

The word, *head*, carries the consistent metaphoric meaning of authority. It is used this way of Christ, husbands, and wives in 1 Corinthians 11:3; of Christ in relation to the church in Ephesians 1:22; and now in relation to the Dragon, the beast, and the false prophet.

Similarly, the horns represent strength as used for the Lamb in Revelation 5:6 and the strength of the dragon and the beast in Revelation 12:3; 13:1, 11; 17:3, 7, 12,16. Metaphorically, they signify political power and strength. See Psalms 18:2; cf. 1 Samuel 2:10; Lamentations 2:3. The notes on Revelation 9:13-16 discuss further the meaning of horns.

The dragon's tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon's strength and power was such that he could challenge heaven and sweep a third of the stars (angels) out of the sky and down to earth with his tail. Thus the rebellion and war between God and His angels and the devil and his angels started.

The dragon stands before the woman that is about to be delivered, that when she is delivered he may devour her child. The timing of the event is that same as the temptation and fall of man. At the birth of the first children, Cain and Abel, the woman struggled against the dragon, who waited ready to devour the child as soon as he was born.

Verse 5 says that she gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. In lineage, the male child was Christ and all those born again (John 3; 1 Peter 1:22-23). Thus the church is called the church of the first born in Hebrews 12:23: “23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven.”

In ancestry, the child was all those true to the Lord from the beginning, bringing Christ to us. The child would rule all nations with an iron scepter. Revelation 2:27 used this phrase of the Lord:

27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of my Father:

Revelation 19:15 expresses the same thought:

15 And out of his mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treads the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty.

All those of the church will rule with him as stated Luke 22:29-30:

29 and I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me, 30 that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and you shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne means that the child was taken up by God to his throne, but the woman, the church, stayed. The woman found her refuge as she fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for one thousand two hundred and three score (1,260) days. The 1,260 days is the same time that the holy city was trampled on and the same time that the two witnesses prophesied in Revelation 11:2-3. 42 months and 1260 days are the same. God protected the woman, the bride of Christ, the church, the holy city, and his revelation against the dragon. God sheltered the woman in a prepared place just as he had sheltered the children of Israel described in 1 Corinthians 10:1-4:

For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 2 and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 and did all eat the same spiritual food; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them: and the rock was Christ.

The figure does not mean that the woman will not suffer, for she is in the desert; and some individuals will falter and some will die, as did the children of Israel. The woman, the holy city, will survive.

War in Heaven

Revelation 12:7-9

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels (going forth) to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels; 8 and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him.

At the time of Adam and Eve, the devil in the form of the serpent had already turned against God and seeks then and now to turn man and woman against God. He immediately led their son Cain into false worship and murder. The *and* here links the war in heaven to the struggle against the woman and her offspring. These are parallel events, related to one another, but separate. It links to the vision itself to the events in heaven, which consummate in the limiting of the power of the dragon and his place down in the world and to hell.

Jude refers to Michael as an archangel in Jude 9:

9 But Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing judgment, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

That the dragon was not strong enough to win shows that God can always control the devil. Jesus was present at the fall and described it in Luke 10:18: "18 And he said unto them, 'I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven.'"

The influence of the dragon and his angels was restricted to the earth. However, even on earth, he was subject to the power of God. For example, he could not move against Job without God's explicit approval in Job 1-2. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, Paul wrote:

13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it.

The dragon does have the power to lead the whole world astray. There is no wondering about who the dragon is. He is the ancient serpent, the devil, or Satan.

A Loud Voice from Heaven

Revelation 12:10-12

10 And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, "Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, 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 loved not their life even unto death. 12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe for the earth and for the sea: because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time."

The previous discussion of the fall of the dragon used the past tense *was*. The following words of instruction and praise are in the present tense. One will have to conclude that, with the victory in heaven, salvation and the power and the kingdom of God was complete. God's victory over the dragon forever predicted the outcome for the dragon. What was to be the outcome for each person who was to live is the central unanswered question. There will be no future coming of the kingdom, for it has come. The New Testament always looked back to this point where Christ was raised to sit over his kingdom and forward only to the salvation of the children of God, whenever they might live upon the earth.

There is a three-fold fulfillment to God's eternal purpose (Ephesians 1).

Salvation has come in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth according to Acts 4:10:

And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.

The power of God has come in Romans 1:16:

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

And the kingdom of our God has come in Colossians 1:13-14:

13 who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love; 14 in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins:

Whatever arguments one might make about when God consummated his plan, it is clear that at the time of this writing it was fully complete. Nothing that follows will predict any changes or any future events not included in his plan at this point.

The authority of his Christ is certain. At the beginning of the Gospel, the devil held authority of all the kingdoms of the world Luke 4:5-7 says:

5 And he led him up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 And the devil said unto him, "To you will I give all this authority, and the glory of them: for it has been delivered unto me; and to whomever I will I give it. 7 If you therefore will worship before me, it shall all be thine.

By the time of his prayer in John 17:2, Jesus had authority to give eternal life:

2 even as thou gave him authority over all flesh, that to all whom you have given him, he should give eternal life.

In Matthew 28:18, just before his ascension Jesus said, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." In 1 Corinthians 15:24, Paul speaks to the very end of the matter:

24 Then (cometh) the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished **all rule and all authority and power.**

An exact description of the authority of Christ in Ephesians 1:19-23 places the focal point of this authority at his resurrection:

19 and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might 20 which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly (places), 21 far above **all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion,** and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22 and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all.

Jude 25 offers a fitting conclusion to the subject of the authority of Christ which he had before all ages and now has and will have forevermore:

25 to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, (be) **glory, majesty, dominion and power,** before all time, and now, and for evermore. Amen.

A loud voice from heaven summarizes the status of the devil:

For the accuser of our brother: The word devil means accuser (diabolos), although accuser here is from a different word (kategoros).

Who accuses them before our God day and night: Job is a good example of the devil accusing someone before God in Job 1:6-12:

Now it came to pass on the day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Jehovah that Satan also came among them.

7 And Jehovah said unto Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered Jehovah, and said, "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it."

8 And Jehovah said unto Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? For there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and turns away from evil.

9 Then Satan answered Jehovah, and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing"? 10 Have not you made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. 11 But put forth your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will renounce you to your face.

12 And Jehovah said unto Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only upon himself put not your hand. So Satan went from the presence of Jehovah.

Has been cast down: The hurling down takes a figurative turn here, as it moves from the result of the struggle in heaven to a struggle for the accused brethren.

They overcame him: The *they* has to be the brethren of Jesus, the followers of the Lamb, for it was by his blood that they overcame the devil.

Because of the blood of the Lamb: In Revelation 7:14-15, there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. There the elder describes the multitude in Revelation 7:14:

These are they that come of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

And because of the word of their testimony. The blood of the Lamb is Christ's part, offered on the cross. The followers' part is the word of their testimony. The church, the called out, individually and collectively, offer this testimony as their part. In Matthew 10:32-34, Jesus placed the good confession (acknowledgment or testimony) as the basis for acknowledgement before the Father. However, conflict resulted:

32 Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven. 34 Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

Individually and collectively (in the church), we hold to the same testimony as taught in 1 Timothy 3:15:

15 but if I tarry long, that thou may know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

The testimony of the church was to make known the manifold wisdom of God to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 3:10). John himself was exiled to Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (Revelation 1:9-10).

They loved not their life:: We met these brethren before in Revelation 6:9:

9 And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. [All Christians die to sin in order to live with Christ See Romans 6].

Even unto death: John summarized the brethren's state in Revelation 2:10, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."

12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens. Heaven will rejoice because of this victory of the brethren.

And you that dwell in them! The brethren, past, and the brethren, present, the innumerable multitudes, and all the hosts of heaven are victorious.

Woe for the earth and for the sea: With the dragon cast down, the earth and the sea are his domain.

Because the devil has gone down unto you! The loud voice calls the dragon the devil (accuser). The dragon and his angels have gone down to the earth and sea.

Having great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time: Having lost the struggle in heaven, it is only a matter of time until the devil's finish.

The Enraged Dragon

Revelation 12:13-14

13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast down to the earth, he persecuted the woman that brought forth the man (child). 14 And there were given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness unto her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

The struggle now is upon the earth, the dragon filled with fury where he turns his wrath toward the woman, the bride of Christ. Peter describes the dragon as a roaring lion in 1 Peter 5:8, "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." The dragon, who saw that he had been hurled to the earth, pursued the woman who had given birth to the man (child). The dragon continues the attack on the woman and her offspring from Revelation 12:6. Here the translators add *child*, leading to the false interpretation of the child, Jesus and the woman, Mary. When in reality the woman is the congregation of the hosts of believers across the ages and the man is the one who dies to sin.

That the woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach reiterates the security of the woman in the desert. Here the figure of the two wings of a great eagle has a direct antecedent in the escape of the children of Israel in Exodus 19:4-6:

4 You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. 5 Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be my own possession from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine: **6 and you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.** [Notice the prophecy that they shall be a kingdom and priests. Compare this to Revelation 1:5 and 5:10 in these notes. Compare *holy nation* and *priests* to 1 Peter 2:9.]

The church will always be out of the serpent's reach. Her children may fall but the church will survive all assaults. *A time, and times, and half a time* is time counted by the lunar calendar as the custom of the Hebrews. *A time* is a year; *two times* is two years, and *half time* is a half year. So far, we have seen *42 months, 1,260 days, and a times, times, and half times*, all of which represent the intermittent time of the church's persecution throughout the ages from the fall of man to the victory of the lamb. The intermittent nature of the persecution and the survival of the woman is in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Daniel wrote of it in Daniel 12:7-10:

7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that lives for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and a half; and when they have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.

8 And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, "O my lord, what shall be the issue (outcome) of these things?" 9 And he said, "Go your way, Daniel; for the words are shut up and sealed till the time of the end. 10 Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white, and be refined; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but they that are wise shall understand.

Revelation 12:15-16

"15 Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. 16 But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth".

The prophets used water and rivers to speak of impending attacks by troops. In Jeremiah 46:6-7, Jeremiah used the figure to describe the troops of the Babylonians:

6 Let not the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape; in the north by the river Euphrates have they stumbled and fallen.

7 Who is this that rises up like the Nile, whose waters toss themselves like the rivers?

A similar figure was used in Jeremiah 47:2:

2 Thus says Jehovah: "Behold, waters rise up out of the north, and shall become an overflowing stream, and shall overflow the land and all that is therein, the city and them that dwell therein; and the men shall cry, and all the inhabitants of the land shall wail.

The troops in this case would be the army of over 200 million in Revelation 9:16 with their mouths of fire, smoke, and sulfur and their tails like snakes. The earth thwarted the dragon by opening its mouth and swallowing the river. The earth has helped the children of God in a similar way in Exodus 15:11-12 when they were fleeing the Egyptians:

11 Who is like unto you, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders? 12 You stretched out your right hand, the earth swallowed them.

In Numbers 16:30, 33, the earth responds in testimony to the power of God compared to the sorcerers of Egypt:

30 But if Jehovah make a new thing, and the ground open its mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down alive into Sheol; then you shall understand that these men have despised Jehovah. . . . 33 So they, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into Sheol: and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the assembly.

Revelation 12:16

17 And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed that keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus:

The result was that the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring — those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. The enraged dragon left the woman (the church), whom he would never defeat because of the power of God and the Lamb, and made war against the rest of her offspring (one by one)—those who obey God's

commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. What follows is the revelation of the nature of the attack on those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. The question of who are the offspring of the woman is here settled forever. **They are those who those keep God's commandments and hold the testimony of Jesus.**