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**A0607 – February 12, 2006 – Rev 12:15 – The Woman, The Dragon, & The Male
Child**

Revelation 12 is the most symbolic chapter in Revelation. And yet I will show you that there is no reason to resort to spiritualizing or allegorizing the text. As with all Scripture we interpret it literally, normally, taking into account figures of speech. But we are not allowed to read into these symbols any old thing we want. By comparing Scripture with Scripture and by reading the context we are going to find that every symbol in this great chapter is interpreted for us so that we are not left to our own fancy.

Chapter 12 can be divided into two sections; verses 1-5 and verses 6-18. The first five verses describe “the past” and the last 13 verses describe “the future”. Let’s read vv 1-5 which describe “the past”.

Outline

- i. The Woman, the Dragon, and the Male-Child (12:1-18)**
 - i. The Past (12:1-5)**
 - ii. The Future (12:6-18)**

Revelation 12:1-5 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. 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. ⁵ And she gave birth to a son, a male *child*, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.

Now, the reason John is given a historical review is so he can understand “the future” which follows. This is a very important principle to understand as a Christian. No other world religion or philosophy can lay claim to the idea that their god has revealed perfectly the past and the future. Ok, let’s get to discuss the principle. The principle is that any past and any future beliefs have consequences on how we live in the present. See, there are pre-requisites to understanding the future. The basic pre-requisite for understanding the future is a proper understanding of the past. Now, we have two basic worldviews today. Both of these worldviews give us a history of the past, what they claim happened. One is the evolutionary hypothesis. This hypothesis and I emphasize *hypothesis*, because in its broadest form evolution cannot be tested. This hypothesis gives us a radically different history than worldview number two; biblical creationism.

Evolutionary hypothesis tells us that the present universe originated about 10-20 billion years ago with the big bang. Everything that now exists is a result of that expansion of the universe and everything that now exists is composed solely of physical matter. It also states that there is an upward development of life. Now, if that is the past then what does that tell you about the future in an evolutionary worldview? Well, logically, it tells you that the universe is going to continue to enjoy upward development. Things are going to get better and better as we advance. It also assumes that since the present universe is billions of years old that, if there is an end to this universe, it must also be billions and billions of years away. So, this worldview basically says what Peter said in 2 Peter 3:3, “in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts,⁴ and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” Now, do you see the logic? Peter is saying that the assumption of the uniformity of natural law, which is the assumption of evolutionary thinking, is a wrong assumption. The assumption that we can re-construct history by applying present natural processes to the past fails to take into account true history recorded in verbal records, such as the Bible.

Now, biblical creationism tells us that the universe originated about 6,000 years ago and that there was a big cataclysmic judgment called the flood because of sin. There are over 260 flood stories, verbal records that attest to the fact of a global flood. I’m most interested in the one in the Bible because it claims to be God’s word and as such a careful analysis shows that it has theoretical plausibility, but nevertheless, it is the flood that the evolutionists that assume uniformity of natural processes are ignorant of and Peter points this out next in verse 5. “For when they maintain this [uniformity of v 4), it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water,⁶ through which the world at that time was destroyed, being

flooded with water.” Now, stop there. Peter is giving us the true history. This is what the second worldview of biblical creationism says the past was like. He’s saying the world was created out of water and by water and that the world was destroyed by a cataclysmic flood. The flood was God’s judgment on a sinful world. If this is the past and men are still sinful then what is the future going to be like? Well, we don’t have to guess, Peter tells us in verse 7. “But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.” So, the present universe is ultimately heading for judgment and destruction. Now, keeping these two worldviews in mind I’m going to show you why this is so important by using a little chart. There is a logic to this that is inescapable and that works out in our personal day by day living. The principle is that any past and any future beliefs have consequences on how we live in the present.

Worldview	Past	Future	Present
Evolutionism	Uniformity of Nature	Uniformity of Nature	Licentious living
Creationism	Cataclysmic Judgment of God	Cataclysm Judgment of God	Responsible living

See, if I believe that everything is just going to go on and on as it is now and that there is no Personal God to whom I must answer and that everything is just an impersonal universe then logically “eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die.” This is the world’s way of living; licentiousness. But if I believe that the past is totally different from what the evolutionist says and I believe that there has been a cataclysmic judgment of sin in the past by a Personal God and that I live in an intensely personal universe then logically “I will live as a responsible creature in God’s universe”. The logic is as simple as that. So, is revelation about the past important? Is history important? Is having a right understanding of history important? You better believe it because it is intimately connected with the future and how we should live in the present.

So, this week as we look at Rev 12:1-5 John is going to show us some of the historical details in a biblical framework and they are essential to understanding the future in 12:6-18. As a by-product we are going to learn how we ought to live in the present. So, this is intensely practical stuff.

The Woman

Revelation 12:1 *And a great sign appeared in heaven, a woman having clothed with the sun, and the moon beneath her feet, and upon her head a crown (stephanos) of twelve stars,*

This verse introduces some symbols and we need to know what they stand for. So, get the picture in your mind of a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. To interpret this *sign* we're going to use another similar Scripture.

Genesis 37:9-10 Now he [Joseph] had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, "Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." ¹⁰ He related *it* to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?"

As you can see both Jacob and Joseph understood the dream properly. The **sun** is Jacob, the **moon** is Rachel and the eleven stars are the eleven brothers of Joseph. This provides the basic background for John's vision in 12:1.

And a great sign appeared in heaven. First, this is a *sign*. Thus, the *woman* is not any one *woman* but a symbol of some other entity or group. Second, it is a *great* sign. This signals the importance of the vision. Third, the *great sign* appears *in heaven*. So, the vision is located in heaven and explains what is going to take place on earth. And what is the *great sign? a woman*. Who is this *woman*? This *woman* gives birth to a *man-child* in verse 5 and since this is not any one *woman* but symbolic of a larger group she must be national Israel. It was national Israel through whom the *man-child* was born. Who is the *man-child*? The Messiah. National Israel gave birth to the Messiah. She is *clothed with the sun and the moon is beneath her feet*. The *sun* and *moon* are light bearers. The *sun* is the source of light and the *moon* reflects light. Being *clothed with the sun* means that Israel was the source through which God's light of revelation came (Rom 3:2). The *moon* is *beneath her feet*. For something to be beneath one's feet is for it to be in subordination to another. Here, the reflective light of natural revelation is subordinate to and interpreted by the greater revelation given to Israel and recorded in Scripture. Scripture gives us the only proper interpretation of nature. On the woman's *head* is *a crown of twelve stars*. This is easy to interpret. Since Israel had twelve sons these *twelve stars* stand for the twelve tribes of Israel through whom the Messiah would come.

woman	=	national Israel
sun	=	special revelation from God
moon	=	natural revelation interpreted by the former
12 stars	=	12 tribes of Israel

Revelation 12:2 and she was pregnant, and she cried out suffering birth-pains even being tormented to give birth.

This describes the nation of Israel pregnant with the Messiah and the birth pains associated with it. “Just as a woman feels the pains of childbirth, so did the nation in preparation for the coming of Christ” (Thomas, 121). It is a fact of history that at the time the Messiah was born Israel was in travail.

The Dragon

Revelation 12:3 And another sign appeared in heaven, and behold a great fiery red dragon having heads seven and horns ten and upon his heads seven crowns (diadema),

The first sign was the **woman** in verse 1 who is Israel. The second **sign** is a **dragon**. Again, this is a **sign** and not a literal **dragon**. We don’t have to guess who the **dragon** is because verse 9 tells us it is Satan (also cf 20:2).

Revelation 12:9 And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan,

Satan is described as **great** and **fiery red**. He is described as **great** because of his immense size and he is described as **fiery red** because he is “flame-colored”. He is a giant intimidating beast. Perhaps he is described as red because he seeks the blood of the **Man-Child** that is born of the **woman**.

He is further described as having **seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns upon his heads**. The description of such a beast or a similar description is found numerous times in the Book of Daniel and Revelation (Dan 7:7-8, 20, 24; Rev 13:1; 17:3, 9-12). Here there is a bit of ambiguity because we are not told where the **ten horns** are located. However, we can basically identify the various aspects of the dragon.

seven heads with seven crowns = seven successive kingdoms

ten horns
kingdom

= ten kings who rule during the seventh

Seven Heads

Head 1 = Egypt

Head 2 = Assyria

Head 3 = Babylon

Head 4 = Medo-Persia

Head 5 = Greece

Head 6 = Rome

Head 7 = Revived Rome

Ten Horns

According to Daniel 7:24 the *ten horns* are located on the seventh head (Revived Rome).

Daniel 7:24 'As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.

Thus, the *ten horns* correspond to ten kings who will rule the whole world when the Roman Empire is revived.

Let's review. The *seven heads with seven crowns* are seven successive kingdoms. The first six kingdoms are historic. The seventh kingdom is still future. The *ten horns* are ten kings who will rule simultaneously during the seventh kingdom.

It is important to remember that the *dragon* who is Satan is the one who is behind all seven of these kingdoms as well as the ten kings of the seventh kingdom. Satan is the "god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4), "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), and "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph 2:2). He is THE primary influence over world kingdoms and kings. Notice down in Rev 12:9 that Satan is the one "who deceives the whole world". It is a CRUCIAL to understand that Satan is the one who is basically behind the entire world system.

Fall of 1/3 of Angels

Revelation 12:4 and his tail dragged down (by force) the third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood (perfect active) before the woman about to give birth, in order that whenever she gave birth her child may be devoured (preyed upon, eaten up).

and his tail dragged down (by force) the third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. The *tail* of a *dragon* is a powerful weapon used to knock down an enemy. The sense in the Greek is that Satan “forced” ***a third of the stars...to earth.*** The *stars* refer to “angels” (cf Dan 8:10). This refers to an ancient war that took place in *heaven* when Satan led a rebellion against God along with ***a third*** of the angels *of heaven*. Satan and his angels lost the war and were ***cast...to the earth.*** This happened long before the Messiah was born (v. 5). Once they were cast down to the earth ***the dragon stood (perfect active) before the woman about to give birth, in order that whenever she gave birth her child may be devoured (preyed upon, eaten up).*** So, the primary strategy of Satan before the Messiah’s birth was not to destroy Israel but to destroy the Messiah at his birth. Satan stood at the door waiting for the birth to take place. When he saw the birth take place he intended to devour the child. The Greek is very graphic and means that when the Messiah was born he would “feast upon his flesh”.

There have been several attempts on the Male-Child in the OT.

- Cain’s murder of Abel (Gen 4:8; 1 John 3:10b-15)
- Fallen angels intermarrying with human daughters (Gen 6:1-4)
- Attempted rapes of Sarah (Gen 12:10-20; 20:1-18)
- Attempted rapes of Rebekah (Gen 26:1-18)
- Pharaoh’s murder of the male children (Exod 1:15-22)
- Attempted murders of David (1 Sam 18:10-11)
- Queen Athaliah’s attempt to destroy the royal seed (2 Chron 22:10)
- Haman’s attempt to slaughter the Jews (Esther 3-9)
- Herod’s murders of the male children (Matt 2:16)
- The crucifixion of Christ (C.S. Lewis portrayed this well in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*)

Messiah’s Birth and Ascension

Revelation 12:5 And she gave birth to a son, a male, who is going to rule all the nations with a rod made of iron. And her child was caught away (harpazo) to God and to His throne.

Despite Satan's attempts Israel ***gave birth to a son, a male***. This shows that the Messiah's birth is not attributed solely to Mary but to the whole nation of Israel. Thus, the stress should be placed on *Israelology* rather than *Mariology*. The nation gave birth to ***a son, a male*** as the Scriptures prophesied. That he would ***rule all the nations with a rod of iron*** recalls

Psalm 2:9 'You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.'

and Christ's promise to the overcomer to share in this rule in

Revelation 2:27 AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received *authority* from My Father;

A ***rod of iron*** is an unbreakable scepter. ***Iron*** is a very dense and malleable metal. Rome was pictured as an iron empire because of its military strength. Despite Satan's attempts during Christ's life and especially at His crucifixion He was victorious and the text skips all these details and takes us immediately to His ascension when He ***was caught away (harpazo) to God and to His throne***. The verb ***caught away*** is *harpazo* and means "to snatch". It is used of Paul's trip to the third heaven, of Philip being caught up after sharing with the Ethiopian eunuch, and of the church being caught up to Christ in the air. It is the word from which we get "rapture" (lat. *raptura*). Since the Messiah was ***raptured to God and His throne*** He was put out of reach of Satan. This does not mean that Satan does not have access to heaven for the purpose of accusing the saints. He still possesses that right but he cannot devour the Messiah. Because Satan cannot get at the Messiah his strategy shifts toward Israel who gave birth to the Messiah. This past conflict between God and Satan is crucial to understanding the future conflict between God and Satan and focuses on Israel.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have a ***woman*** who symbolizes Israel and we have a ***dragon*** who symbolizes Satan. In the past, before the cross Satan's strategy was to feast on the flesh of the Messiah at His birth. He carried out this strategy through the first six kingdoms; Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. His strategy failed and the Messiah came into history safely. After the cross Satan's strategy is to feast on the flesh of Israel who gave birth to the Messiah. This strategy will reach its most intense form in

the seventh kingdom (Revived Rome) ruled by ten kings and especially the eleventh king who is the Antichrist. This will occur during the 2nd half of the Tribulation, aka “the great tribulation” and “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer 30:6-7). The cross is the pivot point of all history. He who blesses Israel will be blessed and he who curses Israel will be cursed (Gen 12:3).

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