

Introduction: these are "in the Spirit" visions given to John giving, not snapshots of heaven, but visible symbols

- The original readers are those who are suffering greatly in a world upheaved by the consequences of sin
- The primary purpose is to comfort, encourage, and give hope to Christian believers in a world which doesn't seem to display the reality of God's sovereign purpose and control
- These are visions – not journalistic accounts of future events – though not strictly factual, it is TRUE
- Don't look for a strict chronology of events (repetition/overlap), but the large truths being communicated
- Invitation to abandon yourself to your imagination as it is set on fire in this wild (extravagant and fantastic) text

I. THE FIRST SIGN - THE WOMAN (vv.1-2)

1 Now a great sign appeared in heaven [from earth's perspective]:

a woman [Mary, national Israel, the church, people of God, Wisdom?]
 clothed with the **sun**, [great glory]
 with the **moon** under her feet,
 and on her head a garland [wreath] of twelve **stars**.

- [one staggering thing is to use such imagery that would clearly invoke ideas from Greek/Roman mythology]

2 Then being **with child**, she cried out in labor [birth pains] and in [tormented, straining at oars] pain to give birth.

- not a scene of tranquility, but of pain and tears and blood
- one surprise is that symbolism that would so clearly evoke images of Pagan mythology are freely used

II. THE SECOND SIGN - THE DRAGON (vv.3-4)

3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red **dragon** (Gk. drackon - only in Revelation)
 having seven **heads** [authority] and ten **horns**, [power]
 and seven **diadems** [crowns] on his heads. [political rule of authority]

- this is not merely some spiritual entity, but exercises rule and authority – complete and full control

4 His tail drew a third of **the stars** of heaven and threw them to the earth.

- either cosmic upheaval or stars symbolizing angels fallen and following in rebellion

And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth,

to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

- Attention is on the Child, ready to eat and consume Him

III. THE BIRTH OF THE CHILD (v.5)

5 She **bore** a male Child

who was **to rule** [tend or keep as a shepherd – 7:17] **all nations**
 with a rod of iron. [not scepter, but weapon to smash 2:27 19:15]

- This Child has a destiny to rule and have authority over all the nations, thus overthrowing the rule of the dragon
- The reason for the dragon's desire to kill is to maintain his control

And her Child was **caught up** to God and His throne. [retelling of the story - bypassing growth, crucifixion, resurrection]

- Before being consumed by the dragon, He is quickly snatched away and set in the throne with God with authority
- This is a visionary retelling of the story, not in exact terms (He didn't grow up and crucified, etc.)

IV. THE FLEEING OF THE WOMAN (v.6)

6 Then the woman **fled** into the wilderness, [uninhabited place, deserted - history of Israel into the wilderness]
 where she has **a place** prepared by God,
 that they should **feed her** there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

- She is taken away to a safe place prepared by God and provided for – similar to Elijah – 11:2-3

V. THE WAR IN HEAVEN (vv.7-9)

7 And **war** broke out in heaven: Michael [an archangel Jude 9] and his angels fought with the dragon;
 and the dragon and his angels fought,

8 but they **did not prevail**, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.

- At this point, the place of the dragon and his angels are in heaven – they fight with the archangel and his army
- Good wins over evil in the battleground of the heavenlies, and they are ousted

9 So the great dragon was **cast out**, that **serpent** of old, called the **Devil** (Gk. diabolos -slanderer)
 and **Satan** (Gk. satanas - adversary), who **deceives** (leads astray, misleads) the whole world;
 he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

- Mixing of images, and if stars then a double casting to the earth

A. REJOICE! THE TRIUMPH OF LAMB (vv.10-12)

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.

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 to the **death**.

12 "Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them!

- The result of the casting to the earth is a call to rejoice in heaven
- The brethren are the ones who overcome the dragon, and this by the blood of the lamb and their testimony
- They also overcome by their own death

B. WOE! THE RAGE OF THE DRAGON (v.12)

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."

- While the heavens are called to rejoice, the earth (where they have been cast) are called to woe and lament
- The devil now has great wrath because this casting down is only temporary, and is facing a coming end
- It is a relatively short time until his undoing

VI. THE WAR ON EARTH (vv.13-17)

13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child.

- In his rage he turns his attention now to the woman

14 But the woman was given **two wings** of 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.

- There is indication that this is a retelling, not chronological (wasn't she already in the wilderness?)
- She is given wings to fly to the wilderness prepared for her to escape the presence of the serpent (is there anywhere one could really go to escape if he is in the earth?)

15 So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood.

16 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.

- Even the creation is involved with her protection as the serpent spews from his mouth a flood

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.

- Not being able to destroy the woman, he turns his attention to her other offspring
- They are identified as those who are obedient to God and have the testimony of the Lord Jesus

The Portrait of Christ

- There is real evil in the world – there is a real devil
- There is one greater than all, the True Myth, the promised Son and conqueror
- Here is a wild and glorious portrait of Jesus Christ who overcomes evil not only by His incarnation, but also through the hoards of His angelic host and His people who treasure Him above all
- The devil may destroy, evil may seem for a time to reign, but God's people are protected and kept because of the blood of the Lamb