

Revelation 12

1. Introduction and Overview

- a. This chapter symbolically portrays the great holy war that lies behind all human history.
- b. Genesis 3:15
 - i. **Holy War:** God has established **enmity** between the serpent and the woman.
 - ii. **Hope for Redemption:** The seed of the woman will bruise the head of the serpent.
- c. It is important to affirm both the reality of this spiritual war and the assurance of total victory for Christ and His Church.

2. The Woman and the Dragon (12:1-6)

- a. The woman is called “a great sign” (v. 1). What does she represent?
 - i. The woman is best understood as a corporate symbol for true Israel.
 - ii. The sun, moon, and twelve stars allude to Joseph’s dream (Genesis 37:9).
 - iii. She is pregnant (v. 2) and gives birth to the Messiah (v. 5).
 1. Isaiah 26:17-19; 54:1; 66:7-9; Jeremiah 4:31
 - a. Doug Kelly: “The history of Israel is the struggle to bring forth Christ.”
 2. In addition to the Messiah, she has other offspring (v. 17). These are Christian believers who are the true spiritual descendants of faithful OT Israel.
 - a. Galatians 3:7: “Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.”
 - b. Galatians 3:29: “And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.”
- b. The great red dragon is “another sign” (v. 3). This is a reference to Satan.
 - i. He is described in a manner that parallels the description of the beast from the sea in Revelation 13:1 (v. 3): seven heads, ten horns, seven diadems.
- c. The dragon seeks to devour the Messiah (v. 4).

- i. His tail sweeps down a third of the stars of heaven (v. 4).
 - 1. This most likely refers to the fall of the angels who have joined Satan in his rebellion.
- ii. He is ready to pounce on the Messiah when he is born.
 - 1. Matthew 2:16-18 is the likely historical event behind this.
- iii. The male child (Christ) shall rule the nations with a rod of iron, but He is first caught up to God's throne (ascension).
 - 1. This references Psalm 2:7-9.
- d. God protects the woman.
 - i. She resides in the wilderness for 1,260 days (cf. 11:3).
 - 1. In the book of Daniel, this 3 ½ year period refers to the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes IV. In Revelation, it appears to be a symbolic period representing intense persecution and suffering. Interestingly, the Roman invasion of Jerusalem lasted for about 3 ½ years.
 - ii. This may refer to when the faithful Jewish Christians in Jerusalem fled from the city and found refuge in Pella at the time of the Roman invasion of the city (Matthew 24:15-20).

3. The Defeat of Satan (12:7-12)

- a. There is a war in heaven, but Satan is defeated (vv. 7-9).
 - i. Michael and his angels vs. Satan and his angels
 - ii. Satan is thrown down.
- b. The description of this battle reveals "the already-not yet" dynamic of NT eschatology.
 - i. The kingdom of God is already here, but it is not yet here in its fullness (v. 10).
 - ii. Satan is already decisively defeated, but he is not yet done fighting (v. 11-12).
 - 1. He knows that his time is short (v. 12)!
- c. Notice what this passage teaches us about what Satan does.
 - i. He deceives (v. 9).
 - ii. He accuses (v. 10).

- d. Notice how God's people overcome the devil (v. 11).
 - i. By the blood of the Lamb
 - ii. By the word of their testimony
- 4. The Ongoing War (12:13-17)
 - a. The woman is protected (v. 13-14).
 - i. She is given "two wings of the great eagle" to fly into the wilderness.
 - 1. Probably a reference to Exodus 19:4.
 - ii. God preserved faithful Israel when believing Jews fled the city during the Roman invasion.
 - b. Satan directs all his wrath against the Church (vv. 15-17).
 - c. Take note of the twofold description of Christians in v. 17.
 - i. They keep the commandments of God.
 - ii. They hold to the testimony of Jesus.