

Revelation 12

The Woman and the Dragon

12 And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. 2 She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. 4 His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. 5 She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, 6 and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

Satan Thrown Down to Earth

7 Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. 10 And 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 brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. 11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. 12 Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!”

13 And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. 14 But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. 15 The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. 16 But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. 17 Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.

The Woman and the Dragon

Genesis 3:15 is a key Old Testament text that gives the backdrop to Revelation. You may be familiar with Genesis 3:15 and the term protoevangelium. This means the first good news. When Adam and Eve gave in to the temptation of the serpent and were first placed under the curse of sin, God in the midst of their cursing also proclaimed their ultimate redemption.

“I will put enmity between you (the serpent) and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.”

The serpent and his offspring are the kingdom and works of Satan. The kingdom of Satan proves to be a counterfeit (later sermons will explore that), but that does not mean that Satan’s kingdom does not have real destructive consequences for the world today.

The offspring of the woman is the only one to have no earthly father: Jesus Christ. Though Satan may seem to be in a position to destroy Jesus and render mankind hopelessly lost, the best he can do is to bruise his heel. Just when Satan seems destined to win, Jesus’ victory destroys Satan and his work.

Revelation 12 is best understood as yet another telling of the glorious cosmic story of the redemption of God’s people. David Platt puts the Good News of Revelation 12 beautifully:

“The Birth of Christ on that day in Bethlehem inaugurated the death of this ancient serpent, just as it had been promised back in Genesis 3. The birth of Christ declared the death of the ancient serpent; the death of Christ defanged the adversary.”¹

Psalms 2 is the other OT text that provides context for Revelation 12. The kings of the earth are an evil world system that rages in opposition to the righteous system of the reign of God. The messianic Davidic Son of Yahweh will be sent to subdue the kings of the earth with a rod of iron.

Despite Satan’s guaranteed and looming defeat, James Hamilton likens his reign on the earth to the violent destruction of a rabid animal. The animal’s death is sealed, but he walks about temporarily to cause death and carnage. We learn many things about the nature and character of Satan from Revelation 12.

- He has no standing with God (v. 8).
- He is the deceiver of the whole world (v.9).
- He is the accuser of the saints of God (v.10).
- He hates the divine miracle of birth. He hates babies.

Satan’s inability to conquer the Messiah causes him to rage against all the God declares as “Mine.” Genocide and racism against entire groups of people and persecution of the church give

¹ David Platt, “Fighting from (Not for) Victory,” Sermon preached at the Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, AL, September 23, 2012.

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testimony to the tremendous power that Satan has to accomplish the destruction of men on the earth. Many theologians have noted the particular Satanic influence that has resulted at various times in history in people embracing the evil of infanticide. I don't believe it is a stretch today to ascribe the same demonic influence to the movement has resulted in millions upon millions of babies aborted in the womb every year throughout the world. I believe we can only make sense of white supremacy and every other form of racial hatred by seeing it as the work of Satan to destroy what God has made and called "good."

- He will not give up without a fight (v.17).
- God demonstrates his sovereignty over the earth when he causes the earth itself to thwart the destructive plans of the devil (vv. 13-17).

Discussion Questions

- Where do you see Genesis 3:15 and Psalm 2 in the text of Revelation 12? Do you think it is legitimate to view Revelation 12 as a retelling of those texts?
- How is the influence of Satan present in the evils of abortion, infanticide, racism, and genocide?
- How can we speak the Gospel of Jesus to fight against those evil world systems?
- How do you see the truths about Satan in Revelation 12 present in your daily life?
- Why is Jesus such a threat to Satan?
- Why does Satan turn to attacking the people of God?
- How have you seen God save his people from the attacks of Satan?