

The Diabolical Dragon

Text: Revelation 12:1-17

Introduction: A few introductory observations.

1. In the seven-year tribulation period (Daniel's 70th week) there are two distinct 3 ½ periods. We are now at the midpoint of the tribulation and the Divine pause button is on in order that our attention might be drawn to some important characters in the tribulation and events that take place at the half way point.
2. Revelation 12 a chapter of "great things". There is a "great wonder" (Vs. 1), "a great red dragon" (Vs. 3, 9) "great wrath" (Vs. 12) and "two wings of a great eagle" (Vs. 14).
3. Events in this chapter are not always in an ordered chronological sequence. Denis Lyle comments: "This vision in chapter 12 does not present a sequence or an ordered chronology. It presents occurrences arranged according to their meaning and importance, from a Heavenly eternal perspective. Events that may be widely separated in time may be clustered together in eternity's view." This is a common feature of prophetic Scripture. Note Vs. 5 for an example.
4. David Cloud: "Revelation 12 describes Israel at the heart of God's program and the devil's hatred toward her. The vision reaches back to the time of Christ's earthly life (Vs. 2-5) and extends to the last half of the Great Tribulation."
5. Revelation 12 portrays the age-old conflict between the serpent and the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15), the war between Satan and Almighty God. It reveals details of the end time wave of Antisemitism that will occur during the second half of the tribulation. It also contains timeless principles for victory in our battle against Satan and his demonic host.

We will divide the chapter into 3 sections for our study.

I. THE WONDERS IN HEAVEN (VS. 1-6)

We are introduced to two wonders and three important characters. "The Bible begins with the story of the woman, the serpent, and the seed; and here it comes full circle and traces the Edenic struggle to its final end." (Phillips)

A. The Woman (Vs. 1-2; 5-6)

There are several women spoken of in Revelation. There is Jezebel (Rev. 2:20), an evil and seductive false teacher in the church of Thyatira; the woman of Rev. 12 we have here; the harlot woman of Rev. 17 representing apostate Christendom and the bride of Christ, representing the church (Rev. 19:7).

1. Her Identity (Vs. 1)

- a. The Catholic interpretation – they say it represents Mary. But it cannot be Mary specifically as Mary never fled into the wilderness (Vs. 6).
- b. The Protestant interpretation – they say it represents the church. But this cannot be the church as the church did not give birth to Christ! Rather, Christ gave birth to the church (Matt. 16:18).

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Also, the church has been raptured from the earth before the tribulation. The rest of the chapter also makes no sense if the woman represents the church. For example, how do you make sense of Vs. 6?

c. The Biblical interpretation – the woman represents Israel for the following reasons:

- i. The symbolism points to Israel. The sun, moon and twelve stars are symbolic of Israel. We find this symbolism in one of Joseph's dreams (Genesis 37:9-11). "Israel is pictured in great glory with the universe under her authority. This will become a reality during Christ's Millennial reign." (Cloud) The figure of Israel as a traveling woman also occurs often in the O.T. (E.g. Is. 13:8; 21:3; 26:17-18; Jer. 4:31; Hos. 13:13; Mic. 4:10).
- ii. The dragon's persecution points to Israel. Vs. 6 & 13-17 clearly indicate a national persecution of Israel, not a historical and individual persecution of Mary or the church.

2. Her progeny (Vs. 2, 5)

a. Her child's identity – Christ.

- i. The incarnation of Christ is in view. Christ came through the nation of Israel (Rom. 9:3-5).
- ii. The ascension of Christ is in view (Mk. 16:19; Lk. 24:51; Acts 1:9).
- iii. Satan hates Israel because she was the vehicle God used to bring the Messiah into the world. Unable to kill the Messiah, he unleashes his rage and fury against the woman (Israel) who birthed the Christ child.

b. Her child's destiny – King.

- i. Luke 1:32-33 "*He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall **reign** over the house of Jacob for ever; and **of his kingdom there shall be no end.***"
- ii. Psalm 2:7-9 "*I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. **Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.***" An iron scepter is one that cannot be broken or resisted. (Thomas)

B. The Dragon (Vs. 3-4)

Revelation 12 contains one of the most extensive and most important descriptions of Satan in the Bible.

1. The Dragon's Portrait (Vs. 3)

- a. 'red' = the color of bloodshed (remember the red horse in Rev. 6:4). Signifies his murderous nature (John 8:44).
- b. 'dragon' = depicts Satan as he really is. An evil monster!
- c. "seven heads" = speaks of his wisdom and intelligence.

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- d. “ten horns” = speaks of his power. The ten horns also point to the devil’s end time kingdom over which the Antichrist will sit (Rev. 13:1; Dan. 7:7-8).
- e. “seven crowns” = speaks of his authority.
- 2. The Dragon’s Partners (Vs. 4a)
 - a. Reference is to the other angels who joined with Lucifer in his original revolt against God (See Vs. 7 & 9).
 - b. Satan’s evil army is well staffed!
- 3. The Dragon’s Purpose (Vs. 4b)
 - a. This verse rolls back the curtains and reveals Satan was the key player behind Herod’s plot to destroy the Christ child.
 - b. Matt. 2:16 *“Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wrath, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.”*

II. THE WAR IN HEAVEN (VS. 7-12a)

A. The Defeat of Satan (Vs. 7-9)

- 1. The Contest with Satan (Vs. 7-8)
 - a. “war in heaven” = up until this point, Satan has had limited access into heaven. This is clearly revealed in Job 1:6 & 2:1.
 - b. ‘Michael’ = a high-ranking archangel who has done battle before with Satan (Jude 1:9). He is called “one of the chief princes” (Dan. 10:13) and “the great prince” (Dan. 12:1).
 - c. “prevailed not” = Satan and his demons are no match for Heaven’s army!
 - d. They no longer have “their place” in heaven. Note: This is not a reference to the historical fall of Satan but to a future event.
- 2. The Casting out of Satan (Vs. 9)
 - a. Who Satan is (Vs. 9a) There are 4 titles of Satan in this verse that all reveal something of his evil nature:
 - i. “the great dragon”
 - ii. “that old serpent” = takes us back to Gen. 3:1. Describes Satan’s deceitful, malignant and destructive nature.
 - iii. “the devil” = means defamer, slanderer.
 - iv. “and Satan” = means adversary
 - b. What Satan does (Vs. 9b)
 - i. “deceiveth the whole world” = Satan is called the “prince of this world” (John 12:31) and the “prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2).
 - ii. Satan is the Master deceiver who often appears as an “angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14). He is referred to as “the god of this world” who has “blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”
 - iii. All you have to do is look around the world and you will see the evidence of Satan’s success as deceiver on every hand (e.g. false religions and philosophies).

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B. The Declaration of the Saints (Vs. 10-12a)

There is rejoicing on account of two wonderful blessings:

1. The Vanquishing of Satan (Vs. 10)
 - a. “now is come salvation...” = The kingdom reign of Christ again anticipated (10a). It is so certain; it is spoken of as an accomplished fact.
 - b. “cast down”. Do you see the picture? Satan is going down! He is “cast out...cast out...cast out...” (Vs. 9), “cast down” (Vs. 10) and “come down” (Vs. 12). Satan cast out:
 - i. **Cast out** of God’s Holy Mountain (Ez. 28:16)
 - ii. **Cast out** of Heaven (Rev. 12:9)
 - iii. **Cast into** the bottomless pit (Rev. 20:1-3)
 - iv. **Cast into** the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10)
 - v. When Satan reminds you of your past, you remind him of his future!
 - c. “accuser of our brethren” = another title and description of Satan. In Vs. 9 & 10 we see Satan’s work in relation to the lost **and** in relation to the saved. Accusing the brethren in God’s presence is one of Satan’s chief activities. The words “day and night” clearly reveal that. However, be encouraged. When the accuser appears before the throne our Advocate also appears on our behalf (1 John 2:1).
2. The Victory of the Saints (Vs. 11-12a)

The three weapons of victory we have against Satan are:

 - a. The blood of the Lamb. Satan was defeated at the cross and fears the blood of Christ (Col. 2:15). “The Lamb’s earlier defeat of the enemy was the basis of their victory.” (Thomas)
 - b. The word of our testimony. Our testimony of salvation is a powerful weapon against the enemy. Nothing can separate us from Christ’s love!
 - c. They loved not their lives unto the death. Total commitment to Christ. These tribulation saints would not deny Christ even in the face of a martyr’s death.

III. THE WOE UPON EARTH (VS. 12B-17)

A. The Persecution of Israel (Vs. 12b-13)

1. The reason for the dragon’s wrath (Vs. 12b)
 - a. Satan’s intense anger is on account of the fact that he knows his time is almost up. Satan knows his defeat is certain but still persists in his rebellion against God until the very end.
 - b. Note: This verse presents a real problem to those who hold the pre-wrath or mid-trib views who try and teach that the first half of the tribulation is the wrath of Satan. Here you have Satan cast down to earth at the mid-point of the tribulation and unleashing his fierce wrath in the second half of the tribulation.
2. The release of the dragon’s wrath (Vs. 13)
 - a. A satanic wave of antisemitism will be unleashed in the second half of the tribulation. Antisemitism has its origins in the heart of Satan. Satan hates Israel because of Christ!

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- b. This takes place at the midpoint in the tribulation when the Antichrist breaks his peace treaty with Israel (Dan. 9:27).
- c. Phillips: "What a time of terror lies ahead for Israel! The world has seen dress rehearsals for this coming onslaught already – the knock on the door at dead of night: the dreaded secret police; the swift ride through the darkened streets to the sidings where the boxcars wait; the dreadful ordeal of days and nights without food, drink, or sanitation, with men and women and children herded like cattle in the dark, and with little babies flung on top of the struggling heap of humanity like so many sacks of flour; the lonely sidings; the barbed wire, the concentration camps; the callous treatment and cruel tortures; and then the gas ovens and the firing squads. It has been rehearsed already in preparation for the full stage production of terror."

B. The Protection of Israel (Vs. 6; 14-16)

God intervenes and protects the Jewish remnant. Israel is supernaturally...

- 1. Saved from the dragon (Vs. 14a)
 - a. Christ spoke of this flight to safety in the Olivet discourse in Matthew 24:15-27.
 - b. The "two wings of a great eagle" denote speed. Babylon and Egypt are described in Ezekiel 17:3 & 7 as a "great eagle with great wings" so the symbolism may suggest some great nation will assist Israel during the second half of the tribulation. It could be the U.S.A.
- 2. Sustained away from the dragon (Vs. 14b)
 - a. Israel is 'nourished' in the wilderness as in the days of old.
 - b. Verse 6 seems to indicate God will use sympathetic Gentiles to do this. Note the phrase "that they should feed her there".
 - c. This ties in with the sheep and goat judgment of Matthew 25:31-46. Note in particular Vs. 34-45. Like in the days of Hitler's holocaust, there will be true Gentile believers who will minister to the persecuted Jews. This will be a practical evidence of their salvation.
- 3. Safeguarded from the dragon (Vs. 15-16)
 - a. The dragon attempts to annihilate Israel as she retreats to safety.
 - b. The 'flood' could represent armed forces (Isaiah 8:7-8; 59:19; Jer. 46:7-8; 47:2-3) or a literal flood of water.
 - c. The earth opens its mouth as it did to swallow up Korah and his fellow rebels in Numbers 16:28-33.

C. The Pursuit of Israel (Vs. 17)

- 1. 'remnant' = in the N.T. the term 'remnant' always applies to Israel and never applies to churches (e.g. Rom. 9:27; 11:5). They are clearly saved as they "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."
- 2. Likely a reference to the 144,000. See Rev. 13:7 and Daniel 7:21.
- 3. The Olivet discourse also indicates there will be attempts to lure the Jews out of safety and hiding (Matt. 24:23-26).

Conclusion: Are you resting in your Advocate or listening to the accuser?