

# The Woman, the Dragon, & the Child

*Revelation 12:1-17*

1. Do you ever wonder why your children *do* some of the things that they *do*? I do.
2. Sometimes I even ask them, “What got into you?”
3. Or, “What *possessed* you?”
4. Have you ever asked that of your children? I have.
  - a. Why did you say that?
  - b. Why did you do that?
  - c. I don’t understand.
  - d. What possessed you?
5. Now, before you get all judgmental about my parenting, let me confess that I ask myself this same question on a regular basis.
6. Sometimes I don’t understand what *I* do.
7. Sometimes I look back at things that I’ve said, or done, or thought, and I ask *myself*, “What were you thinking . . . what got into you . . . what *possessed* you?”
8. Now, sometimes I apply the question to a broader audience.
9. I mean, do you ever wonder why . . . oh, I don’t know . . . governments . . . do some of the things that they do?
  - a. Practice corruption?
  - b. Promote perversion
  - c. Protect baby pandas, but not baby people?

- d. These are just a few examples.
1. What are they thinking? What gets into them? What possesses them?
  2. Today in the United States of America, if a Christian baker refuses to decorate a cake celebrating a homosexual marriage, the government will intervene, and will force that baker to choose between her livelihood and her Christianity.
  3. Of course, today in places like Iran and Saudi Arabia, homosexual acts are punished by death, yet Islam and its Sharia Law are increasingly embraced and protected by the United States government, while Christian beliefs and practices are increasingly criticized and penalized.
  4. And then there's the whole matter of abortion.
    - a. Last year the United States killed more than 600,000 of her children.
    - b. Since 1970 this Evil Empire has butchered more than 44 million of them.
    - c. And just last month the Senate rejected a bill that would at least ban abortions after twenty weeks. It was called the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act.
    - d. And yet our propaganda states that we promote life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
  5. What are we thinking? What gets into us? What possesses us?
  6. Well, let me enlighten you.
  7. It's the same that possessed Pharaoh to drown the Hebrews' children.
  8. And it's the same thing that possessed Herod to slaughter Bethlehem's children.
  9. **There's a great red dragon behind the scenes pulling the strings.**

## REVELATION 12:1-17

Rev. 12:1 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. <sup>2</sup> She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. <sup>3</sup> And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> 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, <sup>6</sup> 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.

## REVELATION 12:1-17

Rev. 12:7 Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back,  
<sup>8</sup> but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> 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!”

## REVELATION 12:1-17

Rev. 12:13 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. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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 . . . (to be continued).

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*Revelation 12:1-17*



19. Revelation 12 opens the second half of the book.
20. In chapters 1-11, John has showed us the struggle for survival that God's people face.
21. The struggle is real, but John promises that JUDGMENT is approaching, that PROTECTION is available, and that VINDICATION is assured.
22. But if that is really true . . . why is all this happening?
23. What possessed the Roman Empire, and the Roman Emperor, and the Emperor Cult to behave the way they did toward Christians?
24. And what possesses the evil empires of today to do similar things?
25. Well, beginning in chapter 12, John gives his readers a BEHIND-THE-SCENES look at the struggle.
26. In chapter 12, he describes a drama that explains in cosmic terms why his readers are suffering as they are, and why God's people will always suffer in the world.
- 27. They are under attack by a great red dragon.**
28. Now, before we go any further, I need to make three things very clear . . . these may be the clearest points of the whole sermon 😊
  - a. First, this whole scene is symbolic.
    - 1) John makes that clear by calling what he sees SIGNS.
    - 2) The images that he sees point to something beyond themselves.

- 3) Furthermore, John employs images here that are well-known to his original audience.
  - 4) The story of a mother who gives birth to a hero who slays a dragon is a common story in the ancient world.
  - 5) In fact, the Romans would have been familiar with the story of Leto – CLICK FOR PICTURE.
    - a) According to the myth, Leto gave birth to Apollo, the son of Zeus, and was pursued by the serpent Python.
    - b) Leto was carried off to an island and protected, while Apollo slew Python.
    - c) Now, I tell you this story because Domitian . . . Who referred to himself as *dominus et deus* (lord and god) . . . Whom we believe to be the ruler of record in Revelation . . . Believed himself to be the incarnation of Apollo.
    - d) But, according to John, Domitian is not the slayer of the dragon, he's the *puppet* of the dragon.
  - a. Second, John interprets some of the signs for us so we won't misunderstand . . . we'll explore those in just a moment.
  - b. And third, while some of the details in this chapter are debatable, the message they convey is not.
  - c. So, let's get on with it.
19. Let's look at the actors in John's drama.

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## 30. First, there's THE WOMAN.

- a. She's the one symbol that John doesn't specifically interpret . . . but the text makes her identity pretty clear.
- b. That she's radiantly attired suggests us that she belongs to God, and that she's wreathed by twelve stars suggest us that she belongs to God's people.
- c. She's also ***"pregnant and . . . crying out with birth pains,"*** and her child is ***"a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron."***
- d. That is almost a word-for-word description of the Messiah from Psalm 2 (9), so scholars debate whether she represents Israel or Mary.
- e. And the answer, of course, is YES . . . sort of.
  - 1) The Israel imagery is obvious.
    - a) Israel is often depicted in the Old Testament as a woman in labor pains until her child, the Messiah, is born (Isa. 66:7-10; Micah 4:10).
    - b) Furthermore, this woman is carried away on eagles' wings to protection in the desert just like Israel in her flight from Egypt (Exodus 19:4).
  - 2) The Mary imagery is pretty clear, too.



- a) Mary was the particular Israelite who gave birth to Jesus the Messiah.
  - b) And at his birth, you might recall, Herod the Great tried to snatch him up and devour him, but the child was protected.
  - c) Now, I don't think Mary is the specific symbol that John has in mind here . . . she's a part of the Israel symbol.
- a. But, listen, the Israel symbol is only part of the symbol.
  - b. The woman is also described in this chapter as one who has other offspring who are pursued by the dragon, and these children are called, ***"those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus."***
  - c. This is a reference to THE CHURCH.
  - d. So this woman represents the complete community of faith . . . all of God's people . . . Israel and the church . . . beginning to end.
  - e. That's the woman.

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## 31. Then there's THE DRAGON.

- a. Dragons were regularly occurring symbols in the ancient world . . . sometimes good . . . sometimes bad.
- b. So that we won't get confused, John paints a pretty *bad* picture of this dragon . . .
  - 1) He's bloody red.
  - 2) He's terrifying . . . what with all the heads and the horns.
  - 3) He's powerful . . . or at least he claims to be . . . he wears crowns, after all, and he wreaks havoc in the heavens.
  - 4) And he's full of evil intent . . . he pursues the woman to devour her child, and when the child escapes, he pursues him to the very gates of heaven before he is turned back, and then he turns his attention to the child's brothers and sisters.
- c. So just *who* or *what* is this dragon? John gives us clues . . .
- d. John calls him "***that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.***"
- e. And the heavenly voice that John hears calls him "***the accuser of our brothers . . . Who accuses them day and night before our God.***"
- f. I don't know of any place in Scripture that provides the devil's origin story .

. . . But this text sure does spark my imagination.

- g. You know, in the Old Testament, *satan* is not a proper name, it's a noun, it means, "adversary."
- h. And this being seems to play that role well . . . he's an adversary to Eve (Gen. 3), to David (1 Chron. 21), to Job (Job 1, 2), and to Zechariah (Zech. 3).
- i. He seduces them, he deceives them, and he accuses them before God.
- j. It sure looks like, at one time, this being had an audience with God . . . had influence with God . . . had a place in the divine council.
- k. But some how, some way he overstepped his bounds . . . and God sent THE CHILD to put an end to his adversarial work and the works it inspires (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; 1 John 3:8).

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- l. The CHILD'S arrival . . .
  - 1) Explains the dragon's pursuit of the woman, and his attempt to devour the Child.
  - 2) It explains Herod's plot to kill the Child at birth.
  - 3) And it explains the opposition to the Child's ministry, and the Pharisees' plans to put him to death.
- m. Despite the devil's designs, God rescued the Child, and brought him to his very throne.
- n. The dragon pursued the child all the way to heaven, where he and the angels who were with him were defeated by Michael and the angels who were with him.
- o. Michael, by the way, is presented in Scripture as the guardian angel of God's people (Dan. 10:21; 12:1; Jude 9).
- p. The dragon was then banished to the earth, and his place before God in heaven was given to another.
- q. **Listen to me carefully . . . the place of the ADVERSARY was given to the ADVOCATE!**

## **32. The CHILD is the ADVOCATE.**

- a. The CHILD was not seduced or deceived . . . he could not be accused before God.
- b. He met the DEVIL'S DECEPTION with GOD'S TRUTH.
- c. And he bore witness to the TRUTH even though it cost him his life.
- d. And now, because of the witness that he bore, all those who bear witness to him join in his victory over the dragon.

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33. This, of course, doesn't end the dragon's evil.
34. Having been defeated in heaven, and having been banished to the earth, the dragon spends what time he has left trying to destroy the rest of God's children.
35. He tried to destroy the CHILD . . . that didn't work.
36. He's tried to destroy the WOMAN . . . That hasn't worked.
37. So now he has set his sights on the woman's OTHER CHILDREN, the Child's brothers and sisters.
38. Does this give you some idea about what's really going on?
- 39. There's a great red dragon behind the scenes pulling the strings.**
40. He's called "*the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience*" (Eph. 2:2).
41. He's called "*the ruler of this world*" and "*the god of this world*" (John 12:41; 2 Cor. 4:4).
42. And he makes furious war with God's people in this world.
43. Listen, the overwhelming flood of evil that we experience comes from one who is DEFEATED and who is DESPERATE to DESTROY as much and as many as he can in the time he has left.
44. All of this is happening, not because the dragon has WON, but because he has LOST.
45. And like a caged and wounded animal who is about to be put down, he fights back with all his might.
46. But God protects his people.
47. That's the final scene in this drama, isn't it?
48. Even though the woman is in the wilderness, even there God NOURISHES her and PROTECTS her . . . and her children.
49. This is a behind-the-scenes look at what's really going on.
- 50. IT'S SPIRITUAL WARFARE!**
51. And it's not just some strange part of Revelation . . . this is exactly what Paul wrote about in Ephesians . . .

## EPHESIANS 6:10-13

Eph. 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup> Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

52. This is spiritual warfare . . . it's not just politics as usual.
- 53. There's a great red dragon behind the scenes pulling the strings.**
54. And we don't defeat him by getting out the vote.
55. The weapons of our warfare are PRAYER and the WORD of TRUTH and the WORK of CHRIST.
56. Because of his witness, all those who bear witness to him, share in his victory.
57. He is their . . . he is our . . . ADVOCATE.
58. Listen, the devil doesn't just deceive nations, he deceives us.
59. If he can't knock off the church through the persecution of evil empires, then he will try to knock us off individually.
60. But, listen, according to this text, he no longer has a place before God to accuse us and condemn us.
61. The one standing before God now is our ADVOCATE, not our ACCUSER.
62. Listen to John . . .

## 1 JOHN 2:1-2

<sup>1</sup>John 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. <sup>2</sup> He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

63. And now I want you to listen to Paul again.

64. I want you to listen to these words in light of what we've learned in Revelation.

65. I want you to listen to them like you're hearing them for the first time . . .

## ROMANS 8:31-39

Rom. 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. <sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;  
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”



## ROMANS 8:31-39

Rom. 8:37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

66. Brothers and sisters, the dragon is defeated.
67. The only way he can destroy us now, is if we let him.
68. So let me ask you, are you accommodating the ADVERSARY, or are you trusting the ADVOCATE?
69. The adversary's time is short and his demise is certain . . . don't let him deceive you . . . don't let him destroy you.
70. Certainly don't let him be what's possessed you!
71. Stop letting him pull your strings.
72. Be possessed by the Child.
73. Let his work be manifested in your life.
74. He will defend you . . . He will protect you . . . He will save you . . . If you let him.