

Session 7

JESUS AND LIVING IN THE LAND OF THE DRAGON

Revelation 12:1-18

Memory Verse

*They conquered him
by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony;
for they did not love their lives
to the point of death.*

— REVELATION 12:11, CSB



Jesus and Living in the Land of the Dragon

THEOLOGICAL THEME: Jesus has already won.

CALL TO ACTION: Where do you need to trust in Jesus's certain victory over sin and Satan today?

Revelation is apocalyptic literature, using symbolism to reveal things about God's actions and future judgment. It features odd, vivid visions to modern minds that evoke emotion in many of its readers.

Throughout our study of the book of Revelation so far, we've seen a lot of symbolism: a scroll that represents God's perfect plan for humanity, astonishing creatures that represent creation, and horsemen that represent the struggles believers walk through in a fallen world.

Last week, we finished reading about the trumpet judgments, and in our reading today, we'll encounter more symbolism, rich with meaning. We'll be introduced to more fascinating figures: a dragon, a woman, a child, angels, and more.



What have you been learning in our study of Revelation so far?



What blessings has God brought you in it? How have you been challenged?

Session Summary

Today we will encounter a dragon, a woman, and her child. These symbolic figures show a very real spiritual war that has been happening for millennia and is still being waged today. Most importantly, Christ has already won! Though the enemy's days are numbered, he is still actively accusing and deceiving believers today.

1. The Woman, The Child, and the Dragon (Revelation 12:1-6)

 Describe the events taking place in this passage. What stands out as significant?

 How are the woman and the dragon described? What might they represent?

The woman in this first sign is strange in appearance. John described her as being “clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head” (v. 1). And she is actively enduring the agony of childbirth. Her description recalls Joseph’s dream in Genesis:

Then he had another dream and told it to his brothers. “Look,” he said, “I had another dream, and this time the sun, moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.”—Genesis 37:9

Later in the passage, we read she “gave birth to a Son, a male who is going to rule all nations with an iron rod” (v. 5). This Son was later “caught up to God and his throne” (v. 5).

The Son is indeed Jesus Christ, so there are connections to Mary the mother of Jesus in this passage, but, more broadly, the woman represents God’s people, Israel.

The heavenly bodies in Joseph’s dream back in Genesis represented his family (the sun, his father, the moon, his mother, and the eleven stars his eleven brothers), from which twelve tribes of Israel came. The woman in this passage wears a crown of twelve stars, representing the twelve tribes on her head.¹ The Old Testament prophets also referred to the nation of Israel as a mother and even used birth pains language (Isaiah 26:17-19; 54:1, Micah 4:9-10).

The second sign in this passage is a “great fiery red dragon” (v. 3). He has seven heads, all wearing crowns, ten horns, and a vicious tail that “swept away a third of the stars in heaven and hurled them to the hearth” (v. 4, possibly a reference to the trumpet judgments or fallen angels in Satan’s rebellion against God²). The identity of the dragon is revealed later in 12:9:

So the great dragon was thrown out—the ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the one who deceives the whole world. He was thrown to earth, and his angels with him.
—Revelation 12:9

He holds some (borrowed) authority, a degree of power (he has ten horns, a symbol of strength),³ and he's waging war. This is first against the woman and her son, and later, against her offspring (more on this in 12:17). Recalling the birth of Christ in the gospels, the "dragon" maneuvered through Herod, trying to kill Jesus (Matthew 2:16). This war between the dragon and the people of God was referenced all the way back in Genesis 3:15, but the defeated enemy still wages war against all believers today. This is the cosmic reality we find ourselves in, and it's important that we remain aware and alert, watching for the enemy to move against us.

 **What are some ways Satan continues to wage war against God and His people today?**

The period of time mentioned in verse 6 is the same mentioned in 11:3 (the period of protection for the two witnesses). The wilderness represents a place of provision in the Bible. The wilderness is a place where humans can't care for their own needs and must depend on God. The wilderness is where God cared for His people after bringing them out of Egypt. And in the wilderness, God lovingly cared for an emotionally distraught Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-6).

2. The Dragon Thrown Out of Heaven (Revelation 12:7-12)

 **What is the significance of the events in this passage?**

 **What important things do we learn about the "dragon" in this passage?**

In these verses, a heavenly war was waged between God's and Satan's forces. The book of Daniel describes heavenly warfare (Daniel 10:12-14), and Michael is the archangel Daniel identified as being the protector of Israel (Daniel 12:1).

Both sides have angelic forces at their back, but at the end of the day, Satan can't prevail. He loses, and Christ wins. Jesus secured a heavenly victory through His redemptive work on the cross, defeating the enemy, the deceiver (v. 9), for good.

? What was the proclamation of the voice from heaven? How does this impact our lives today?

The verses shouted by the loud voice in heaven proclaim Christ's victory. The accuser has been thrown down, defeated "by the blood of the lamb" (v. 11). This is cause for rejoicing!

But this section ends with an ominous warning. The devil may be defeated, but he continues lying, accusing, and deceiving with "great fury" and an understanding that "his time is short" (v. 12). He's determined to make the most of it.

3. The Woman Persecuted (Revelation 12:13-18)

? How did the "dragon" react to his defeat?

? What happened with the woman and her offspring? How do we see God's provision?

Finally, the dragon lashes out. The defeated "dragon" was cast down to earth, but he went down fighting. The passage describes a relentless pursuit of the woman and her offspring, which the passage identifies as "those who keep the commands of God and hold firmly to the testimony about Jesus" (v. 17).

The description of the woman again holds Old Testament significance. The phrase "a time, times, and half a time" is taken from Daniel, referencing a period of persecution for "the holy ones" in the end times:

He will speak words against the Most High and oppress the holy ones of the Most High. He will intend to change religious festivals and laws, and the holy ones will be handed over to him for a time, times, and half a time.

—Daniel 7:25

The reference to eagles wings reminds us of God’s deliverance of His people in the Exodus:

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. —Exodus 19:4

Even in the midst of the enemy’s persecution, God provides.

Scholars don’t all agree on the meaning of the “flood” described in verse 15. Is it literal? Is it metaphorical? Perhaps it refers to the enemy spewing slander, suffering of some kind (Psalm 32:6), divine judgement (Isaiah 28:2), or unjust opposition (Psalm 18:3-4).⁴ In the midst of whatever this flood represents, God continues to provide.



How have you experienced God’s provision amid great trials?

The dragon was furious in the face of this divine provision, and we would do well to remember John’s next words:

So the dragon was furious with the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring,—those who keep the commands of God and hold firmly to the testimony about Jesus. —Revelation 12:17

The offspring in view here is God’s people—us! The war Satan wages is ongoing, and we are in the middle of it right now.

Conclusion

Our passage today contains some mystery and a lot of symbolism, but there's two points to focus on.

Jesus has already won. Christ's decisive victory was won on the cross. Jesus died for our sins, was buried, then was raised three days later, defeating death and the grave. God is on His throne and in charge, with everything in hand. Nothing can thwart His plan. In a world ruled by Rome, John's initial audience would have been comforted by this truth, and we find hope in it today, too. Jesus has already won.

The enemy is still actively waging war against us. The enemy is defeated but still allowed to operate until Christ returns and the new creation is established, and he's making the most of the time he has left by trying to lie and deceive as many believers as possible. This passage describes him as a heinous dragon. If this was literally how he waged war against us, it would be hard to miss. But that's just symbolism. In reality, we can't see what he's doing. He works hard to fly under the radar. Many don't even realize they are being manipulated by him. The enemy has had millennia to hone his arsenal of destruction, and he's good at it.

Our passage describes Satan as "the accuser" (v. 10). He accuses us of lies that simply aren't true. But God wants us to see what's happening and reject these ideas. The truth is God loved His people before the foundation of the world was ever laid and has redeemed us fully in Christ.

In his book on Revelation, *The Overcomers*, Matt Chandler mentions a couple of the lies he sees repeatedly in his pastoral ministry:⁵

- I don't know how to pray / I'm not good at prayer
- I can't understand the Bible

Believing these lies keeps us from prayer and the Bible. If we neglect these practices, it keeps us from growing in the life God desires for us. We must reject these lies.

The enemy is the king of deceit (v. 9). He is the father of lies. He peddles false doctrine, wanting us to misunderstand God's character. He wants us to doubt and feel slighted. Anything to drive a wedge in our relationship with the Lord. He attacks the church, deceiving to divide and seeking to knock us off mission. We must wake up to these schemes and stand against them in Christ.



What lies has the enemy tried to sow in your life? How have they affected you?



Read Ephesians 6:10-18. This passage deals with how to stand against the spiritual warfare of the enemy. What stands out to you? How can we better arm ourselves against the lies of the enemy?



How do we stand against the enemy when we have gospel conversations with others?

Memorize

*They conquered him
by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony;
for they did not love their lives
to the point of death.*

- Revelation 12:11, CSB

References

¹Christopher A. Beetham and Nancy L. Erickson, eds., *The NIV Application Commentary on the Bible*, One-Volume Edition, NIV Application Commentary (Zondervan Academic, 2024), 1307.

²A. Boyd Luter, "Revelation," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

³Matt Chandler, *The Overcomers: God's Vision for You to Thrive in an Age of Anxiety and Outrage* (Thomas Nelson, 2024), 106.

⁴Beetham and Erickson.

⁵Chandler.