

Jesus and Living in the Land of the Dragons

October 25, 2026

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Revelation 12:1-18

Session Outline

1. The Woman, The Child, and the Dragon (Revelation 12:1-6)
2. The Dragon Thrown Out of Heaven (Revelation 12:7-12)
3. The Woman Persecuted (Revelation 12:13-18)

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?

Jesus and Living in the Land of Dragons

Introduction

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.

Revelation 12

Chapter 12 is crucial for understanding John’s view of the sequence of history. The number three and a half was associated by Christians and Jews with times of evil and judgment (see Luke 4:25). John variously referred to the three and a half years as either “42 months” (11:2; 13:5) or “1,260 days” (11:3; 12:6) or “a time, times and half a time.” For John it was the period of time when the powers of evil will do their oppressive works. But during this time, God will protect His people while they both bear witness to their faith (11:3) and simultaneously suffer at the hands of these evil powers (11:2, 7; 12:13–17; 13:5–7).



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?

Prayer of Response

Thank God for His good plan for humanity. Thank Him for sending Christ and praise Him for the victory He has already achieved over the enemy. Ask for His help to identify the lies the enemy seeks to sow in your life and to show you what next steps to take.

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*

Additional Resources

- *Be Victorious* by Warren Wiersbe
- *Exalting Jesus in Revelation* by Daniel Akin
- *Revelation for You* by Tim Chester



Historical Context of Revelation

Purpose

Much of the book of Revelation focuses on events at the end of the age (eschatology), more so than any other book in the Bible. But it also focuses on practical choices that believers and unbelievers must make in the course of their lives that have far-reaching consequences at the end.

Author

The traditional view holds that the author of Revelation is the apostle John, who wrote the Fourth Gospel and the three letters of John. Evidences for this view include the following. (1) The writer referred to himself as “John” (1:4, 9; 22:8). (2) He had personal relationships with the seven churches of Asia Minor (1:4, 11; 2–3). (3) His circumstances at the time of writing (1:9) matched those of John the apostle (who was placed in Asia Minor from about AD 70 to 100 by reliable historical sources from the second century AD). (4) The saturation of the book with Old Testament imagery and echoes implies a Jewish writer, like John, operating in overwhelmingly Gentile Asia Minor.

Setting

The initial audience that received the book of Revelation was a group of seven local churches in southwest Asia Minor (1:11; 2–3). Some of these congregations were experiencing persecution (2:9–10, 13), probably under the Roman emperor Domitian (ruled AD 81–96). Others had doctrinal and practical problems (2:6, 13–15, 20–23). Also behind these surface problems was the backdrop of unseen but powerful spiritual warfare (2:10, 14, 24; 3:9).

Special Features

The resurrected, glorified Jesus Christ revealed himself to the apostle John, who had been imprisoned “on the island called Patmos” (1:9). Christ’s twofold purpose was: (1) to “unveil” a spiritual diagnosis for seven of the churches in Asia Minor with which John was familiar (chaps. 2–3), and (2) to reveal to John a series of visions setting forth events and factors related to the end times (chaps. 4–22).

Extended Commentary

Revelation 12

12:1–2 John used an important term he had used in the Fourth Gospel (Jn 20:30)—sign. It is first used for imagery that echoes Joseph’s vision in Gn 37:9, speaking of the people of Israel. More likely this sign refers to ethnic Israel or a believing remnant of Jews. The woman being pregnant and in labor and agony recalls Gn 3:15–16. The prophecy of the virgin birth (Is 7:14) of Christ may also be in view.

12:3 The second sign (see note at vv. 1–2), a great ... dragon, is interpreted in v. 9 as referring to the devil and Satan. The description of the dragon having seven heads and ten horns is similar to that of the beast in 13:1, but different enough (“ten horns and seven heads”) to make clear that the two are separate characters.

12:4 It is possible that a third of the stars in heaven being swept away is related to the destruction of one-third during several of the trumpet judgments (8:7–10, 12; 9:15, 18), but since the dragon symbolizes Satan, these “stars” may stand for fallen angels who followed Satan in his rebellion (Mt 25:41). The phrase the dragon stood in front of the woman ... so that ... it might devour her child indicates that the attempt of King Herod the Great to kill the baby Jesus (Mt 2:1–16) was satanically inspired.

12:5 The words Son ... all nations, and with an iron rod are allusions to Ps 2, which is replete with messianic prophecy. The narrative then leaps ahead all the way from the birth of Christ to his ascension (see Ac 1:9–11).

12:6 Some time after the ascension of the Son, the woman is supernaturally cared for by the Lord for 1,260 days (three and one-half years)—the exact words that describe the period of protection of the two witnesses (11:3). This probably takes place shortly after the two witnesses have ascended, near the beginning of the second half of a seven-year tribulation period. The woman fleeing likely is representative of Jewish converts who feared God (11:18) and glorified him (11:13) after the witnesses were resurrected and ascended (11:11–13). The imagery of the woman is a continuation from the faithful remnant of Israel, including Mary the mother of Jesus. The wilderness was the setting where the nation of Israel was protected by the Lord from Pharaoh’s army and was miraculously fed manna and quail (Ex 16).

12:7–10 Because it is mentioned immediately after the woman fleeing into the wilderness (v. 6) and because its outcome immediately affects the earth at the end of the age (vv. 12–13), the war ... in heaven probably also takes place just after the midpoint of the tribulation period. The sense that the “woman” in Rv 12:6 is a believing remnant of Israel (see notes at 11:13; 12:6) is strengthened by the clash of the dragon (identified as the devil and Satan) with Michael the archangel (Jd 9), who is assigned to protect Israel (Dn 12:1).

12:11 Sometimes what looks like defeat is victory, as when believers die for their faith. Satan has killed them, but they are the ultimate victors because of the blood of the Lamb (Christ’s death on the cross) and the word of their testimony.

12:12 Because Satan has been banned from heaven (vv. 7–9), the heavens and those who dwell in them can rejoice. The “heaven dwellers” are the counterpart group in Revelation to the “earth dwellers” (see 3:10; 6:9–11; 8:13; 11:8–10; 13:8). The devil, having been cast down to earth, is enraged and will take out his great fury on the earth and the sea, because he knows his time is short.

12:13–14 Out of frustration for being cast out of heaven and thrown down to the earth (vv. 7–9), the dragon (Satan) persecuted the woman (believing Israel) for a period of three and one-half years. The phrase time, times, and half a time is a year, two years, and half a year—three and one-half years total. This phrase is taken from Dn 7:25 and 12:7, where it speaks of a period in which “the holy ones” are persecuted in the end times. That the woman was given two wings of a great eagle is the same imagery used of Israel escaping the Egyptian army in the wilderness (Ex 19:4).

12:15–16 There is no way of knowing if the onslaught of the serpent ... dragon (Satan, see note at vv. 7–10) against the woman (believing Israel; see v. 6; 11:13), as well as the description of the Lord’s protection (the earth ... swallowed up the river), is meant to be taken literally. Perhaps a metaphorical interpretation is intended.

12:17 Unable to get at the woman, the devil (the dragon) turns aside to wage war against (i.e., kill, 11:7) the Gentile “saints” (13:7). The Gentiles are called the rest of her offspring because they are Christ’s “other sheep that are not from this [Jewish] sheep pen” (Jn 10:16). The other offspring, like John (Rv 1:9) and the martyrs seen under the heavenly altar (6:9), have kept the commands of God and the testimony about Jesus.⁶

References

1. Christopher A. Beetham and Nancy L. Erickson, eds., *The NIV Application Commentary on the Bible*, One-Volume Edition, NIV Application Commentary (Zondervan Academic, 2024), 1307.
2. A. Boyd Luter, “Revelation,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).
3. Matt Chandler, *The Overcomers: God’s Vision for You to Thrive in an Age of Anxiety and Outrage* (Thomas Nelson, 2024), 106.
4. Beetham and Erickson.
5. Chandler.
6. Luter.