

Study 24: Revelation 12:1-9

12 A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head.

- In Genesis, the promise was uttered that there would be enmity between the serpent and the offspring of woman. Here we see that promise depicted once again.
- This woman is probably a symbol of the Church. Anyone reading this who was outside the church would have no idea what was being depicted here. But believers would be able to understand this symbolism; unbelievers would have no idea what is being taught here.
- Remember, Revelation was written to churches under threat of persecution from Rome. Any direct correspondence that portrayed Rome or Caesar in an inferior position to God or His people could have been used to increase the pressure against the church. If we are to understand Revelation, we must in part understand what it meant to the churches to which it was written.
- The message was that the opposition was real and powerful. But God was with them and would preserve them. Rome was not supreme; God was supreme.
- The same message is true today for anyone or any church encountering any system, philosophy or government trying to establish its rule or law above God's. They may succeed for a season, but ultimately, they will fail and God will emerge victorious.
- The woman is adorned in symbols. She is human but she is heavenly. She stands on creation, but is above it. She has the stars of the gospel and the Church in her hair. She is the bride of Christ. The Church is born in heaven but is made known on earth.

13 She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.

- The Church is always in labor to bring forth sons and daughters of God. It is the job of the Church to preach the gospel; angels cannot do it. It is not an easy task and there is great opposition to God's desire that all men come to a knowledge of the truth.

This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

- The enemy of the Church, Satan, does not want this and uses all his power to oppose the birthing of spiritual children.

14 Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads.

- Satan and his dark kingdom are pictured as a red dragon. The numbers attributed to his heads, horns and crowns could have been references to Rome (founded on 7 hills, having 10 provinces, and 7 leaders that persecuted the church). Or maybe the numbers just added to the fierceness of the portrayal of the Church's opponent.
- Notice that a dragon is a serpent of sorts, but much more fierce and foreboding than the one pictured in Genesis. The dragon has grown in strength and power since then.

15 His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born.

- The dragon has waged war against the offspring of God. (God promised Abraham that his descendents would be more numerous than the stars of heaven; could these stars be God's children whom the dragon caused to fall from their position? Could it be a reference to those fallen angels that were cast from heaven at Satan's rebellion?)
- The dragon stood vigilant to oppose any offspring from the woman. He is ever desirous of destroying those who would turn from his kingdom to God's.
- The dragon was using the current world government but the Church was not to mistake who it was fighting. Paul wrote,

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints (Ephesians 6:10-18).

- Some of what you are now experiencing in your family, on your job or in other relationships is spiritual warfare. You must approach it as such or be found fighting the wrong enemy with the wrong weapons.

16 She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.

- The Church in conjunction with Christ will rule the nations. It is of note that Christ, who shares in the humanity of the Church, came into the world the same way: through the birth of a woman. This would not escape the notice of the reader in the early church.
- We are all training to rule with Christ.

17 The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.

- God protects the Church. The “woman” here was under attack from the dragon, but the Lord hid her for a season. He prepared a place for her.
- I like to quote Colossians 3:3, which states:

For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

- For something to get **to** me, it must get **through** Christ, since my life is hidden with Him. If the Church experiences persecution or hard times, it is the will of God and not some foreign evil force that suddenly does what it wants. God is in control.

18 And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.

- I wonder how the angels fight? Do they have spirit swords, or do they fight “hand to hand?” However they fight, they do fight.
- The Church doesn’t do the fighting; the angels do the fighting. It is always a spiritual battle.

19 But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven.

- Satan loses. It’s as simple as that. Every “ism” has become a “wasm” because God is victorious and protects the Church. Satan tries to establish supremacy in heaven, but he is always defeated.

20 The great dragon was hurled down-- that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

- The devil is a formidable opponent and has some power and permission to create havoc on the earth. By the way, Satan is only one created being. He cannot be everywhere all the time. He is not omnipresent or omniscient. He cannot read your mind. When people say the devil did it, or when they rebuke Satan, seldom are they directly dealing with him. They are dealing with his angels or demons.
- The Church has outlived and out-survived despots, armies, and ideological opponents. It will continue to do so. The Church needs to act like it is invincible spiritually, but not allow that to translate into arrogance.
- The Church is victorious through Christ. That is the message of Revelation. The Church has withstood her own mistakes, the attempts by governments to wipe her out, and the onslaught of the devil to stand victorious, but only victorious in Christ.
- The truth that Paul wrote was true for the Revelation Church and it is still true today. Take hope in his words. Walk in their truth and power.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died-- more than that, who was raised to life-- is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:28-39).

- We walk in the tension of persecution and hatred from the world system where we live and the reality of the protection of heaven. Jesus said we would be in the world but not of the world.

I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify

www.purposequest.com

them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world (John 17:14-18).