

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Revelation 12:1-5 | Session 16 | The War Against Messiah

In the book of Revelation, there are seven pairs of visions given to John. The first pair of visions pertains to events that are taking place in Heaven, and the second part of the pair concerns events taking place on Earth.

- 1.1 | The First Vision in Heaven (4:1-5:14).
- 1.2 | The First Vision on Earth (6:1-7:8).
- 2.1 | The Second Vision in Heaven (7:9-8:6).
- 2.2 | The Second Vision on Earth (8:7-11:14).
- 3.1 | The Third Vision in Heaven (11:15-18).
- 3.2 | The Third Vision on Earth (11:19).
- 4.1 | The Fourth Vision in Heaven (12:1-12)

4.1 | THE FOURTH VISION IN HEAVEN (12:1-12)

We come to the central subject of the entire book, found in the central pair of the seven visions and the literary center of the book. Chapters 12-15 relate to the actual unveiling or revealing of the glorious Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. In one sense, the book of Revelation is chronological since we see things like the first trumpet, second trumpet, third trumpet, etc. But it is not always linear; it jumps to the future, pauses the action, or goes back into time (which we will see in this chapter). The trumpet judgments have all sounded, and now we have a break in the action before the seven vials (or bowls) are poured out on the earth.

In the next several chapters, Satan is shown attacking the nation of Israel; He will use two human beings to do his bidding, or as they are called, two beasts, the Antichrist and the False Prophet.

It may look like all is lost in chapters 12 and 13 and that God is no longer in control, but in chapter 14, we will see six scenes of hope that God is still in control. But our chapter tonight reveals Satan's hatred for the Jewish people. It might give us a better perspective on why our world is in the mess that it's in. We have an enemy, one that even we in the body of Christ have to put on armor each day to stand against (Ephesians 6:11). While I don't believe, in the dispensation of grace, there is a demon under every rock, the things that happen in the physical world often are dictated by an invisible angelic conflict between the angels of God, and the fallen (demons) angels of the evil one.

This fourth central vision is historical in that these events chronologically come before chapter six, although written down later as John sees the vision.

In our last session, we saw Satan already wreaking havoc on the earth and killing the Two Witnesses, but how Satan came to be on the earth we have not yet been told, so we are taken back in prophetic time in chapter 12 to find out. If you want a behind-the-scenes look at the Christmas story, Revelation 12 is where you should turn.

Verse 1—

The next several verses are a history lesson showing the strategy of Satan, which he tried, and it didn't work; that is, to stop the birth of Jesus Christ.

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, or better translated, *sign*. What does that word *sign* tell us? We should not take what we are about to read as literal but as a *sign* of something else. John writes that it is a **great sign**. Therefore, one with importance and significance.

A woman clothed with the sun,

The moon under her feet,

And upon her head a crown of twelve stars.

For those who have a Catholic background, you may have seen icons and pictures of Mary depicted as this woman as the queen of heaven. And so, some believe incorrectly today that the **woman** is the Church. To come up with that faulty interpretation, the Catholic Church has made stuff up to fit its theology.

Many people will tell you that the book of Revelation cannot be understood. But if we let Scripture interpret Scripture, the only way to find the truth in a passage, and look for something corresponding to this. We have to remember that Revelation is the unveiling, not the veiling. Why would the book be called *Revelation* if God didn't want us to understand it? But let's not make up stuff to fit our agenda.

In the Old Testament passage of Genesis 37:9-10, about Joseph's dream, we see Jacob (later Israel) as the sun and Rachel as the moon. The brothers in that passage are, in Joseph's dream, stars. There is no mistaking the Revelation passage and the Genesis passage as one. Therefore, the **woman** in 12:1 is the entirety of Israel, the patriarch, matriarch, and tribes. It is so clear that it makes us wonder why people go out of their way to make other stuff up.

Once we figure out who the **Woman** is, the entire passage makes sense.

Verse 2—

Being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. John sees the beginning of the Jewish people and the prophecy of the coming Messiah, promised in Genesis 3:15. That promise foretold of a time in which the seed of the woman would crush the head of Satan. It would take 4,000 years for the birth described here to come to pass. This birth had always been the object of Israel's hope; everything pointed to the Messiah, and His coming was the subject of the prophets. The strategy of Satan has always been to stop it.

We can think of a few places very quickly where Satan made his attempt. For example, why does the Bible record Cain murdering Abel in Genesis 4? In 1 John 3:12, we are told that Cain's works were evil and his brother's righteous. Satan likely reasoned that the Messiah would come through *righteous* Abel's lineage. By taking out Abel, the problem would be solved. Or Genesis 6:1-4, that strange passage where we read about the *sons of God*, whom I take to be angels, cohabitating with human women. Why would that happen? Satan was at work trying to mix or damage the genetics of the human race so that a Messiah couldn't be born who was fully man.

Or what about Pharaoh, who attempted to drown all the male infants in the Nile to stop the Messiah from coming from the Hebrew race (Exodus 1:16)? Later in Matthew 2:3, Herod kills all (male) children under two years old in Bethlehem to try and stop the King who was prophesied to be born. Over and over again, we see Satan's attempt to stop the Messiah. When he failed, and after the Messiah was born, Satan worked overtime to stop Him from fulfilling His mission—he even tried to drown Jesus on the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 8:26; Mark 4:39; Luke 8:24). We could spend an entire sermon series looking at Satan's attempts to thwart God's plan of the ages, and each attempt required Divine intervention. It all stems from God's promise in Genesis 3:15.

That is what the entire Old Testament is about. If you understand that, then the Bible begins to make sense, and the details of the Old Testament begin to fit into place.

The birth of Messiah, although so much pain and suffering prefaced it because Satan was always attacking it to stop it, was the "*Joy of all mothers of Israel* that a man is born into the world (See John 16:21). Haggai 2:7 describes this birth as "The desire of all nations."

The Church didn't give birth to the Messiah. Again, we have to reject that interpretation outright. It is clear that the **woman** is the "sign" of Israel and the birth of the Messiah, the hope of Israel.

Verse 3—

And another sign was seen in heaven...a great red dragon. We don't have to guess who this is. Verse nine tells us it is *that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan. Having seven heads and ten horns.* We have seen from our Daniel study that these are signs of earthly dominion. Seven kingdoms were seeking to annihilate the nation of Israel; Egypt, Syria, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome – these could be what the seven heads signify. Also, the **ten horns** we discovered in Daniel are the horns of the final confederacy or empire.

Satan's color **red**, or the color of blood, could be a *sign* of his cruelty and blood-thirstiness (John 8:44). But the idea here in this sign that John sees is earthly power.

Verse 4—

And his tail drew (literally dragged) **the third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth.** Could this speak of Satan's first rebellion and the angels (demons) who fell with him? It certainly shows his power over some of the angels, but whatever, it seems clear from this that a third part of the angels followed him in his great rebellion.

The dragon stood...For to devour her child as soon as it was born. The verb **stood** is in the *active* form, which indicates something ongoing, so **stands** might be a better way to look at it. From Genesis 3:15 onward, there has been a great conflict of the ages in which Satan has attempted to frustrate the truth of God's plan of a Redeemer and a chosen people. It is a thread that runs from Genesis through Revelation 20 until finally, Satan is cast into the Lake of Fire. Each time Satan made his attempt to stop God's plan, Divine power ensued to thwart the devil's subtlety; from the corruption of mankind, to Abraham, to Jacob and his family, to the Nation

of Israel, to the royal line of David, to the Nation again, to the Seed of the woman... Satan's goal has always been to **devour**.

Verse 5—

She brought forth a man (Literally, male) **child, who was to rule all nations...** The words **who was** mean *who would* or *who is about to* rule **with a rod of iron** (see Psalm 2:9) since Jesus has not ascended to the throne yet, but will at His second coming.

Her child was caught up unto God and to his throne. This is where Jesus is today after ascending into heaven (Acts 1:9), at the right hand of the throne of God the Father. Jesus is not on his throne, the throne of David, but one day will be. Satan's attempt to stop the Messiah failed, but he will turn his attention to God's people to wipe them out so that no Kingdom can be established.

THE DISPENSATION OF GRACE FITS RIGHT HERE, BETWEEN VERSES 5 AND 6.