

# The Revelation of Jesus Christ

## The Birth of a Ruler

### Revelation 12:1-17

#### INTRODUCTION:

This morning, not are we starting the second half of Revelation, but also to what is a high point in the book. We finally get a glimpse into what lies behind the conflict that exists between the church and the world. Up until this time we have seen the conflict. The seven letters to the seven churches showed us the vast array of trials that will afflict the entire church throughout this entire period between Christ's first and second coming, which the scriptures call "the last days". We saw that there were all kinds of things like temptation, false teaching, persecution, rejection from society, as well as many other things that will go on throughout this period of time.

In the first eleven chapters we got some glimpses of events that are going on behind the scenes. But until now, it has not been spelled out for us as to why the world has so much animosity against the church. But that all changes here.

This passage, for many of us, probably sticks out in the book of Revelation. I know it does for me. It is one of those chapters that sticks out in my mind. That is because it takes us to a deeper dimension of that **spiritual war** by introducing us to the spiritual forces that are instigating and energizing this conflict.

So this morning, we will be looking at the spiritual battle that lies behind the conflict that the church faces. Unfortunately, we will not have time to cover the entire chapter sufficiently in just a half hour, so this will be a two part sermon. Let us give honor and attention to God's word as we stand and read Revelation, chapter 12.

#### All Stand and Read Scripture

Revelation 12 (NASB)

The Woman, Israel

12 A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; <sup>2</sup> and she was with child; and she \*cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth.

The Red Dragon, Satan

<sup>3</sup> Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads *were* seven diadems. <sup>4</sup> And his tail \*swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.

## The Male Child, Christ

<sup>5</sup>And she gave birth to a son, a male *child*, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. <sup>6</sup>Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she \*had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

## The Angel, Michael

<sup>7</sup>And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, <sup>8</sup>and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. <sup>9</sup>And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. <sup>10</sup>Then 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 brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. <sup>11</sup>And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. <sup>12</sup>For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has *only* a short time.”

<sup>13</sup>And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *child*. <sup>14</sup>But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she \*was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. <sup>15</sup>And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. <sup>16</sup>But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. <sup>17</sup>So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

## Prayer

Our Father in heaven, we know that the book of Revelation is a book to be seen. These are visions. I pray Father, that You will help us to see that which we are being shown here. We pray that we will see it a way that we can understand it, and in understanding it, we gain encouragement.

I pray that what we learn here this morning will encourage us in our faith and cause us to be drawn closer to You. Be with us now, in the presence of your Holy Spirit. Give me grace as I stand and proclaim Your word in a manner that glorifies Jesus Christ, Ruler over all.

In Christ's name I pray. Amen.

## BODY:

### **I. THE WOMAN, ISRAEL.**

I suspect that most of us do not know what to make of Satan. We hear of Satan. We see

movies that portray this Satanic being, like the Exorcist, and we are scared. But on the other hand we do not spend much attention to him because it is like that "out of sight, out of mind" mentality where Satan is sort of like the Red Riding Hood wolf that lives in the deep, dark, part of the forest. He may be there or he may not be there, but we do not worry about him because we never wander into the deep, dark, part of the forest. Many of us think of Satan in this way and that is unfortunate. Because that mentality plays right into his hands. It is the attitude by which he would prefer for us to think of him.

What I hope we accomplish here this morning and next week is that our understanding of our adversary will cause us NOT to live in ignorance, but rather that we take what we know of him and the advantages he has over us and use it to our advantage by turning it against him.

To do this, we have to work our way through this vision. I am sure that as we read through the scripture this morning, you saw, like so many places in Revelation, some complexities to it. We have gotten used to this, because, as we know, in the case of Revelation, so many elements of the vision that we have embedded here are actually symbols that are drawn on from the Old Testament.

This scene reads like a story line through a certain period of time in history. What I would like to do is walk through this vision and identify these symbols to point out who, or what, or even when, these elements are actually referring to. Once we have walked through the vision, I would like to reconstruct it, if you will, at the end, to give you the understanding that you need in order that you can engage in the battle that we are in with courage and encouragement. **That is the plan.**

With that in mind, we turn to this vision.

Revelation 12:1-2 (NASB)

The Woman, Israel

12 A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; <sup>2</sup> and she was with child; and she \*cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth.

Who is this? Our first clue is found with the number twelve. She had twelve stars in her crown. The number 12 is always associated with good. So when we see the number 12 here we know it must be something that has to do with God's people.

The twelve stars suggest both the twelve sons of Jacob who made up the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles. This supports the identification of the woman as both Israels.

Remember what Peter taught us? He referred to the promise in Exodus that God made to His chosen people.

Exodus 19:5-6a (NASB)

<sup>5</sup> Now then, **IF** you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; <sup>6</sup> and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'...

Since Israel repeatedly worshiped idols and did not obey God the promise was given to the church.

1 Peter 2:9-10 (NASB)

<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation (Exodus 19:6), a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; <sup>10</sup> for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

We are the fulfillment of the promise in Exodus 19:3-6! We are that fulfillment.

Now Israel and the church are the same. Because we have kept the promised heritage alive that the Jews abandoned. So the title does not go with them. The title, by definition, is the people of God. Jesus bought us with His blood. He came to establish a kingdom. And when He left, it was called the church. He found and taught twelve disciples to establish a new Israel to continue what the Jews had abandoned.

<sup>2</sup> and she was with child; and she \*cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth.

We say the mother is Israel, but when we read this verse who does that sound like? Mary. Right? Especially when we look down at verse 5 and see who she is giving birth to. She gave birth to a son Who will reign with a rod of iron.

We see that reference to the Messiah in Psalm 2:9.

Psalm 2:9 (NASB)

<sup>9</sup> 'You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.'

So this woman is giving birth to the Messiah.

Is that Mary? Yes! Is it Israel? Yes! Will it also become the church? Yes!

What you will find is that the image of the woman encompasses a lot more than just Mary. However, at the base level, it is Mary.

## II. THE RED DRAGON, SATAN.

Revelation 12:3-4 (NASB)

The Red Dragon, Satan

<sup>3</sup> Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads *were* seven diadems. <sup>4</sup> And his tail \*swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.

I'm always captivated by good impressionists – people who can mimic the voices, quirks, and facial expressions of others. It's a tremendous talent and takes a great amount of study and work to do it well. And when it's done well, it commands our attention.

Revelation 12 and 13 introduces us to the greatest impressionist of all, who also

commands our attention. His stage name is Satan and he mimics the trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Satan is the FATHER IMAGE of this unholy trinity. He is accompanied by the Antichrist and the false prophet. In these verses Satan is pictured as THE GREAT RED DRAGON. We believe that God the Father is the Creator, who shared His authority and power with His Son in order to bring about worship and praise of Himself. And this dragon, is a father image who mimics God perfectly. The dragon, Satan by name, is the creator of evil who shares his authority and power with another to bring about WORSHIP OF HIMSELF.

Here we see a red dragon. Red symbolizes bloodshed, warfare, and ruthlessness. The dragon has seven heads which indicates great vitality and ten horns. The number 10 is always associated with evil. This indicates that he has complete evil power.

4 And his tail \*swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. The Bible tells us in Revelation 1:16 that stars refer to angels.

Revelation 1:20a (NASB)

<sup>20</sup> As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches,...

These stars represent the good "angels", or messengers, sent to the seven churches. And here in verse 4 the stars refer to the evil angels that were cast with Lucifer from heaven.

In verses 3 and 4, SATAN IS POISED and ready to capture and kill this newborn child. Recall that Satan used the jealousy and wrath of Herod to slaughter the innocents in a vain attempt to reach the child. Satan; himself went himself into the wilderness to try to tempt and topple Christ, but to no avail. When Jesus began to minister, Satan aroused the Pharisees and the established religious leaders, and governmental authorities to stop Him. Eventually they had their day as they nailed Him to the cross.

### **III. THE MALE CHILD, CHRIST.**

These first six verses shows a woman crying out, being in labor and in pain to give birth. We sing "silent night" but I assure you there is no silence here. Mary is screeching in pain. Then we see a red dragon waiting to devour the child when it arrives.

Revelation 12:5-6 (NASB)

5 And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.

Mary gave birth to the Messiah who will rule the nations with a rod of iron just as prophesied in Psalm 2:9. But we also know that this child was crucified on the cross, was buried, and rose again on the third day. Then He ascended into heaven to His throne thereby sealing Satan's doom.

<sup>6</sup> Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she \*had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

Like the old Israel that wandered in the wilderness, the new Israel, the church must dwell in her own wilderness. The old Israel is a type of the new. As long as the Lord is personally absent, the church is in the wilderness. Just as the place of the wilderness

wanderings was a place of Jewish safety from Pharaoh (the devil), just so the wilderness of the church represents her place of safety from the mighty red dragon (Satan).

Both the Old Israel and the New Israel went through a time of trials, testing, and temptations in the wilderness. In both cases many will fall, but a remnant will enter Canaan or heaven.

Then John talks about one thousand two hundred and sixty days or 42 months. Just as the preceding five verses are symbolic, this is also a symbolic period of time, not literal. This time period represents the existence of the persecuted church between the first and second coming of Christ. The saints of Christ are reigning with Him now in His kingdom and Christ already has the authority in heaven and upon earth.

Here is the reality of our time on earth. We live in a daily tension between this earthly world of evil and the heavenly world of good. We travel and do battle here on this earth, but our citizenship is in heaven. As long as we are earthbound, life will never be easy; THERE WILL ALWAYS BE TURMOIL AND TRIBULATION; WE ARE LIVING IN ENEMY OCCUPIED TERRITORY! When we make a firm commitment to challenge Satan to bring it on, make no mistake about it, he will!

As Martin Luther wrote, **(Sing)** “For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe; his craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal.”

But again, note that the Church will not be defeated! Satan will wage his war against the Church throughout the ages but he WILL NOT WIN! Satan will be no more successful in his pursuit of the Church than he was with his pursuit of Christ! We can take heart. God spiritually protects His own. The Church may have her martyrs, but she will also have her victory!

## **CONCLUSION:**

Jesus was born so one day the price could be paid for the things we have done that are wrong. The Bible says that all have sinned. We do things that do not please God. Through the sins of Adam and Eve, we have all inherited the nature of sin. We need to have our sins removed. The only way is through Jesus Christ. Jesus came to earth to be born as a man so He could die on the cross for ALL of our sins.

Satan's goal was to first wipe out Christ when He was born. When that failed he turned to the church. We know that Satan is powerful. He is more intelligent than us and he knows our weaknesses.

So, how can we stand firm and achieve victory?

Revelation 12:11 (NASB)

**<sup>11</sup> And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.**

**This is the Day!**