

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Dragon and the Woman

Revelation 12:1-6

INTRODUCTION:

It's that time of year again. December has come and with it all the joys of Christmas. But what is the real meaning of Christmas? Is it the gifts under the tree, the lights in the windows, the cards in the mail, turkey dinners with family and friends, snow in the yard, stockings hanging in the living room, and shouts of "Merry Christmas" to those who pass us in the streets? Is this really Christmas?

For some people, Christmas may be a time of sorrow. They don't have the extra money to buy presents for their children, family, and friends. Many are saddened at this time of year when they think of their loved ones who will not be able to spend Christmas with them. Turkey dinners may be only a wish and not a reality for some.

Yet, Christmas can be a season of great joy. It is a time of God showing His great love for us. It can be a time of healing and renewed strength. Christmas is when we celebrate the birth of Jesus.

We may not be celebrating the correct month or even the correct year that Christ was born, but we do celebrate the true meaning of Christmas regardless of His true birthday.

The true meaning of Christmas is love.

God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to be born. His birth brought great joy to the world. Shepherds, wise men, and angels all shared in the excitement of knowing about this great event. They knew this was no ordinary baby. The prophets had told of His coming hundreds of years before. The star stopped over Bethlehem just to mark the way for those who were looking for this special child.

Why did He come? 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.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Revelation 12:1-6 (NASB)

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; ² and she was with child; and she *cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth.

³ 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. ⁴ 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.

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. ⁶ 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.

Prayer

BODY:

I. THE WOMAN WITH CHILD.

Let's go back to the old little town of Bethlehem where Christmas and Revelation are connected!

Revelation 12:1-2 (NASB)

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; ² 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)

⁵ 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; ⁶ 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)

⁹ 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; ¹⁰ 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.

² 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)

⁹ 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.

Revelation 12:3-4 (NASB)

³ 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. ⁴ 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)

²⁰ 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. We learn about the war in heaven between Michael and his angels and Satan in verses 7-9.

Revelation 12:7-9 (NASB)

⁷ And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, ⁸ and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. ⁹ 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.

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 BIRTH OF A SON.

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. ⁶ 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.

Have you ever seen a nativity scene that looks like this?

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. Have you ever seen a dragon shown in a nativity scene? There is a professor at Ozark Christian College that puts one there! You will normally see little kids dressed up like cows, donkeys, and lambs, at the scene, but NOT A BIG RED DRAGON! But that is what we have here.

Can you imagine a child having this role in the play. Dressed up as a red dragon, he stands in front of Mary so he might EAT HER BABY! That would send grandma into a tizzy!

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.

⁶ 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 might 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 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 protects His own. The Church may have her martyrs, but she will also have her victory!

CONCLUSION:

John has just pulled the veil open and given us a glimpse of what was really happening in Bethlehem the night Christ was born. The true meaning of Christmas is the celebration of this one incredible act of love that God gave to us.

John 3:16-17 (NASB)

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

Jesus was born so one day the price could be paid for all of the things we have done that are wrong. The Bible says that all have sinned. We are all born with a sin nature. We do things that do not please God. Through the sins of Adam and Eve, we have all inherited that sin nature. We need to have those removed. We cannot do it ourselves. The only way is through Jesus. Jesus came so He could die on the cross for ALL of our sins. . If we believe that Jesus died for our sins, we can ask Him to come into our hearts and forgive us and wash us of our sins through the waters of baptism. Then, we are clean and made whole. We can then have the assurance of an eternal life in heaven in the glory and presence of our Creator, free of all sin, when this life is over.

He is Lord!