

Intro. If you weren't familiar with the Bible & you heard someone reading the section we're about to read, you might think it is the stuff of medieval lore, for it mentions a great red dragon ready to devour a king. Long before the medieval era, Jesus Christ gave the Apostle John this Revelation. Today, we begin a series focused on the work of Satan on the earth, so I've entitled it “When All of Hell Breaks Loose on Earth.” We begin with Revelation 12 & “A Woman, a Dragon & the King Child.”

Theme: Salvation history & Satan's work

Background: John has written several things which will take place in the final days, including 7 seals being broken on a document on the end-times & 7 trumpets sounding the coming judgment.

- As I've mentioned before, I believe Revelation is a series of visions, each one intensifying the events recorded in the previous one. Thus, I see 7 big sections in Revelation—chapters 1-3; 4:1-8:5; 8:6-11:19; chapters 12-14; chapters 15-16; chapters 17-20; & chapters 21-22 (the first is introductory & the last is conclusive & the middle 5 largely focus on the end times)
- That is to say, I believe Revelation is largely cyclical rather than linear
- Thus, this is the 4th act & deals primarily with the work of Satan on the earth, especially during the last 3 ½ years of the Great Tribulation

Explanation of the Text:

- When John uses the word “sign” (12:1, 3), he uses it either as a miracle (like the Gospel of John) or especially as a pointer to an important truth. He uses it 7 times in Revelation to portray either the work of God or Satan & his fallen angels (12:1, 3; 13:13-14; 15:1; 16:14; 19:20)

I. The woman is Israel (12:1)

- The reference to the sun, moon & stars play off of Joseph's dream (Genesis 37:9)
- The 12 stars refer to the 12 tribes of Israel but may also refer to her victory through time—though many tried to defeat & demolish Israel, she survived
- The woman's labor & pain may refer to the afflictions experienced by God's people throughout history, especially in their oppression from Egypt & Assyria & Babylonia while longing for the Messiah
- She gave birth to the Messiah
- She fled into the wilderness, which symbolizes complete dependence on God while He makes her ready spiritually (cf. Elijah's time in the wilderness, John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul)
- Her flight into the wilderness probably refers to her transformation into the church & fleeing for protection from Satan's persecution—the reason I say this is because historically, the people of God was Israel & then became the church (part Israel but also made up of Gentiles) & because the woman's offspring include Christians or the church (see 12:17)
- She found safety for 1,260 days (3 ½ years; cf. 11:3)—probably the same reference as the Antichrist's rule over the last 3 ½ years of the Great Tribulation & the events occurring during that time period (42 months [11:2; 13:5]; a time, times and half a time [12:14]; see Daniel 9:27)

II. The great red dragon is Satan (12:3)

- His greatness refers to his size & influence
- That he is red (fiery red) symbolizes warfare (also used of the rider of the 2nd horse, 6:4)
- His 7 heads & 7 crowns means he is complete in his evil & holds sway over political leaders (see 17:9-10)—he is the “prince of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)
- His 10 horns refers to his power—he isn't all-powerful like God, but he has great power on the earth
- I'll say more about the heads & the crowns in chapter 13
- His fall from heaven resulted in taking 1/3 of the angels with him—I'll say more about his fall next time in the following passage

- He tries to devour the woman's offspring—all throughout history, Satan has tried to defeat the godly offspring of Eve, including Abel, the Hebrew male children in the time of Pharaoh, Haman's desire to exterminate the Jews in Esther's time; King Herod's intent to kill Jesus—but Satan fails in his plans

III. The male child is Jesus Christ (12:5)

- He is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron—His reign will be universal over all nations
- “rod of iron”—promised in Psalm 2:9 (see also Revelation 19:15)
- He was born into the world, but Satan could not touch Him, for every time he tried to tempt Him & bring Him down, He was victorious
- John's vision mentions Christ's birth (His earthly ministry) & then His ascension (His heavenly ministry)—He was caught up to God & His throne

Application of the Text:

I. Beware of the work of Satan, for he is powerful & destructive

- Jesus told us, “The thief comes to steal, to kill & to destroy, but I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly” (John 10:10)
- Satan is deceptive, like a snake, but he's also powerful & destructive, like a dragon

Illus: If you've read the book *The Hobbit* or watched the last 2 movies, you know one of the Satanic figures in the movie is Smaug, a dragon who overthrew the dwarf kingdom & lived among the gold. He breathed fire & destroyed many & many underestimate the power of Satan only to find themselves in his clutches

II. Surrender to the all-powerful Christ who will rule all the nations

- Since He's going to rule all the nations anyway, why not give your life to Jesus now?
- When I mention “surrendering to Christ,” I don't just mean coming to Christ through repentance & faith, though that's the first step. Surrendering to Christ is similar to what Peter says when he tells us to “set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts” (1 Peter 3:15)—it's a daily exercise where you start your day & say, “Lord, I'm yours. Do with me however you see fit today.”
- That mindset should revolutionize & transform your life, because it will help you see yourself as His witness in the workplace & school & community.
- Such a way of thinking also affects your family, because you put Christ first & read His Word in your home & gather as a church, not giving your kids veto power over your spiritual leadership as father & mother

Illus: I hear parents say “I don't make my children attend church because I don't want to push them away from the faith.” That won't push them away from the faith, because their sin nature will be bent to walk away from the faith on their own. Your bringing them with you will expose them to the Lord & the things of God so His Spirit can work in their lives. But make sure you reinforce the Christian faith in the home by reading the Word of God together (let me know if you need a plan, because I don't recommend reading through the Bible as a family the first time together).

Conc. Life can be a matter of perspective. I heard about Earl & Ethel, a couple who had been married for several decades & they went to Ethel's 50-year High School reunion. They arrived a little late & the dancing had already started & they noticed everyone encircling one man who was really cutting a rug. After several moments, Ethel whispered to her husband, “You know, my senior year of high school, that man asked me to marry him but I say ‘no.’ What do you think about that?” Earl thought a moment & said, “It looks to me like he's still celebrating.” Life is a matter of perspective. You may think all is well & good without Christ dominating your life, but you are only deceived by Satan, for he is trying to drag you down with him. Won't you come to your senses & repent & trust in Jesus today?