

Worship Guide - Lake Mary
WORSHIP SERVICE -
12.12.2021

THE WOMAN, THE DRAGON,
AND THE CHILD

I. INTRODUCTION

MAIN POINT: An ancient conflict, with an ancient foe, is behind the opposition and struggles of the Church.

Revelation 12:1-6

And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. 2 She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. 4 His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. 5 She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, 6 and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

II. THE CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE WOMAN

And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. 2 She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth.

- There are some who interpret this woman to be Mary, the mother of Jesus.
- In one sense this is Mary as she bore the incarnate Christ.
- But this reference is to something more, of which Mary is just a type of the woman—the woman is a symbolic figure.
- OT reference to the story of Joseph.
- Genesis 37:9-10 Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, “Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.” 10 But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, “What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your

mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?”

- Jacob knew that the dream represented him, his wife, and his sons. It was a prophetic dream that they and their descendants would become the people of God.
- In Isaiah, one of the pictures that is frequently used of restored Israel is that of a woman (Is.52:2; 54:1-8; 61:10).
- The woman is the people of God who were anticipating and awaiting the Messiah.
- In Gen. 3 we have the first announcement of the gospel. God curses the serpent and says to him:
 - Genesis 3:15 “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”
 - The seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman would be in conflict.
 - God’s people were like an expectant mother awaiting the promised child, ready to give birth to the Messiah—this is Mother Israel.
 - Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.
 - That’s why the woman is depicted as having birth pains and the agony of giving birth.
- But she is not just representative of the people of God in the OT. She is also representative of the people of God in the NT, the church age.
 - v6 and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.
 - The same symbol of the woman tells us that after giving birth and her child being caught up to God, she flees into the wilderness where she is protected and cared for by God for 1,260 days. We already know what that means—that period of time characterized as the church age, also as the tribulation (42 months, time, times, and half a time).
 - She represents the people of God in all ages—the whole covenant people of God.
 - This is why it isn’t just a reference to Mary—it’s Mary and all of true Israel, the church of Jesus Christ.

THE DRAGON

And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems.

- Rev. 12:9a And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.
- He’s the ancient serpent of the garden.
- The depiction of him as a dragon symbolizes his ferocity, his fury.
- The imagery of seven crowned heads and ten horns symbolizes the scope of his authority and rule.
- The dragon’s influence and effect is felt world-wide.
- Jesus called him the ‘ruler of this world that was about to be cast out’ (John 12:31).
- Paul refers to him as the ‘god of this world’ (2 Cor. 4:4).
- John says that the ‘whole world lies in the power of the evil one’ (1John 5:19).
- But he has a false claim of sovereign universal authority.
- He can only exercise authority and power to the extent that has been granted to him by God.

- v4 His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth.
- The backdrop for this reference is an allusion to Daniel 8:9-10,24.
- The stars in Daniel's vision are not referring to angels. Daniel 12:3 tells us they are identified with the people of God who are called stars.
- His tail sweeping some of the stars from heaven and casting them to the earth can be understood as the dragon's attack against the people of God, throughout the entire age preceding the birth of Messiah.
- Almost without exception, dragon imagery is used in the OT to represent wicked and evil kingdoms and rulers who persecute God's people and oppose the kingdom of God (Ez. 29:3; 32:2).

THE MALE-CHILD

5 She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne,

- Psalm 2, a Messianic Psalm concerning The Lord's Messiah.
- Isaiah 9:6a For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder,...
- This can only be Jesus Christ, the Messiah.
- The entire scope of Christ's life is given in an abbreviated form to emphasize the reality that persecuted Christians are living in the post-ascension era.

III. THE DRAGON'S FURY AND DEMISE

1. THE FURY OF THE DRAGON

v4b And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it.

- The dragon attempts to kill the promised seed of the woman.
- If the dragon knows when and where the child will be born, he can intercept and eliminate the threat.
- And that's what we see throughout all of redemptive history up to the time of Christ; a relentless attempt by the dragon to prevent the Messiah from coming.
- We know from the Christmas story surrounding the time after the birth of Christ, where Herod has all of the male children in Bethlehem under the age of two slaughtered.
- That was a satanic plot, a failed attempt of the dragon to destroy the Messiah.
- But it goes all of the way back to the beginning.
- Cain vs. Abel, Ishmael vs. Issac, Esau vs. Jacob. Those blood feuds were instigated by the dragon in an attempt to subvert the prophecy of his demise.
- Pharaoh's order to kill all of Israel's male children (Ex. 1:15-22).
- Haman's plot to destroy the Jews during the time of Esther (Esther 3:8-13).
- Satan was unsuccessful in all of those attempts. He could not stop Eve's promised descendent from coming.
- Having failed in his attempt to prevent the Messiah from coming, he redirects his efforts to the destruction of the Messiah now that he has arrived.
- He tries to tempt Jesus in the wilderness with wealth, power, fame, and glory. (Matt. 4:1-11).
- He tries to induce Jesus to sin in Gethsemane, at the trial, and even at Golgotha.

- The dragon did everything in his power to destroy the male child but every attempt was met with defeat--Messiah, was born.

2. THE EXALTATION OF THE CHILD

V5c but her child was caught up to God and to his throne,

- Jesus fulfilled his earthly ministry., obeyed God perfectly, resisted every temptation flawlessly.
- Jesus destroyed the power of the dragon at Calvary.
- Jesus conquered death and the grave in his resurrection.
- Jesus was exalted to the right hand of the Father.
- He defeated the devil, decisively winning the war of the ages and securing salvation for his people.
- Colossians 2:15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.
- Hebrews 2:14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,

3. THE PERSECUTION OF WOMAN

6 and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

- Why is the dragon so hell-bent on destroying God's people?
- The Church has been given the task of gospel proclamation.
- Every time Satan hears the gospel preached he hears his death sentence.
- 12:12 tells us that "he knows his time is short!"
- Though he was decisively defeated, he serves God's purposes for a time.
- He continues his relentless persecution of the people of God.
- Using Exodus imagery, God's people are in the wilderness, the place of trials and tribulation, where she will face the wrath of the dragon.
- She is spiritually protected by God, who nourishes and sustains her in the wilderness, just like God did with his people in the Exodus story.

Two truths to remember:

- Because it's Advent, I want us to be reminded that the Christmas story begins in the Garden and NOT in the Manger.
- We're also to live with the knowledge that we are in the midst of a cosmic conflict that continues to be waged, though our enemy is defeated.