

Revelation 12:1-6 | The Woman & The Dragon

Introduction

This is one of the most interesting chapters in Revelation. It is a cosmic view of the hostility between Satan and God's redemptive purpose for His creation.

Chapters 12 through 14 open up a "40,000 foot" view of the major players in redemptive history, from the very beginning to the final consummation detailed in the closing chapters (17-20) of Revelation.

Tom Schreiner: "John was told to prophesy more (Rev. 10:11), and chapters 12–14 fulfill that commission. All of history concludes with the seventh trumpet and the third woe, but John steps back so that readers can survey history from another perspective. The perspective is cosmic, encompassing the battle with the Devil (12:1–17), the emergence of the two beasts (13:1–18), and visions of heaven and earth (14:1–20). The focus in chapter 12 is on the conflict with the Devil, a conflict going back to Genesis 3. John opens up a transcendent and heavenly view for his readers."¹

Verse-By-Verse Notes

Verses 1 & 2

- Some (especially Roman Catholics) see the "woman" as Mary, mother of Jesus, but she is best understood as a reference to *faithful remnant Israel* who gives birth to the Messiah.
- Israel is routinely seen in the Old Testament as God's bride (Jeremiah 2:2; Hosea 1-14; Ezekiel 16).
- The radiance of the woman reflects the exalted status of Israel as God's bride (Isaiah 62:1-3) and the crown of 12 stars would seem to reference the 12 tribes of Israel.
- The language of verse 1 seems to echo the language of Joseph's dream in Genesis 37 which would be consistent with seeing the woman as a reference to Israel as the people of God from whom the Messianic Redeemer would come. Remember the promise made to Eve – Genesis 3:15 (protoevangelion – the "first/original gospel").
- Israel is frequently depicted as the mother of God's people – see Isaiah 54:1-5 and Isaiah 66:7-10.

Verse 3

- The dragon is *Satan* (see Revelation 12:9; 20:2), the "archenemy of God and his people" (Robert Mounce). The seven heads and ten horns represent the earthly kingdoms Satan has control of.

¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, "Revelation," in *Hebrews–Revelation*, ed. Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar, vol. XII, ESV Expository Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 658.

Verse 4

- This is most likely a reference to the angels that Satan took with him at his fall, though some see it as reference to Daniel 8:10 and the violent persecution of Israelites by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the 2nd century B.C. that Daniel prophesied would occur. Verse 9 would indicate, however, that John is referencing fallen angels here.
- The dragon is positioned to destroy the child of the woman – Satan will make every attempt to kill the Messianic Child. (See Matthew 2 and Herod’s slaughter of the baby boys of Bethlehem, when Satan tempted Christ to commit suicide by throwing Himself off the pinnacle of the temple in Matthew 4, and when he attempted to kill Christ through the resistance and persecution of the Jews and religious leaders during His ministry in Luke 4:29.)

Verse 5

- An obvious reference to the birth of Christ. The language echoes the Messianic Psalm 2 – especially vv. 6-9.
- When John writes, “her child was caught up to God and to his throne,” this is a reference to the ascension of Christ, indicating that all of Christ’s Messianic Redemptive work is captured in this single verse/phrase. See Hebrews 1:1-3.
- Satan was unsuccessful in all his attempts to destroy Christ.

Verse 6

- John seems to be referencing Israel in the 2nd half of the tribulation. Other interpreters see this as a promise of protection for God’s people in times of persecution in this present evil age.
- Satan has always hated Israel and will continue to war against her until the very end.
- Paige Patterson: “Were it not for this miraculous preservation, the long-standing antagonism of Satan against the Jewish people would lead to their annihilation. But God intervenes miraculously to preserve and protect a remnant.”²

BIG IDEA: SATAN IS THE ARCHENEMY OF GOD AND HIS PEOPLE, BUT WILL NEVER SUCCEED IN HIS PLAN TO DISRUPT REDEMPTIVE HISTORY.

² Paige Patterson, *Revelation*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, vol. 39, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2012), 266.