

God's Revelation of the Future

Community Baptist Church
Lesson 8

Adult Bible Fellowship
Fall, 2024

The Woman and the Dragon – 12:1-17

The visions in chapter 12 describe two primary characters and interactions between them. One is a woman, picturing Israel, and the other is a dragon, picturing Satan.

- John sees a sign. In this case it's a woman. (12:1)
 - The description of this woman and what follows leads to the conclusion this woman pictures God's people, Israel, at various points in the nation's history.
 - She is seen as pregnant, ready to give birth. (12:2)
- John sees a second sign. In this case it's a "great red dragon." (12:3)
 - This dragon is clearly identified in 12:9.
 - The dragon is described as having seven heads and ten horns and seven diadems.
 - Some, like MacArthur, see the 7 heads as world empires that have interacted with Israel. They include: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and Antichrist's future empire.
 - The sweeping by his tail of the stars is thought to be an historical allusion to Satan's fall and those who followed him. (12:4)
 - The dragon is poised before the pregnant woman waiting to kill her offspring when she delivers. (12:4)
 - This was fulfilled when through the agency of Herod when all male children under two were killed.
- The woman gives birth to a male child. (12:5)
 - This was fulfilled at the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.
 - This child would rule the nations. Cf. Psalm 2:8-9.
 - This child was taken up to God, referring to his ascension after his death and resurrection.
- At this point what John sees moves to the future, even our future.
- The woman is next seen as fleeing into the wilderness.
 - There she is cared for by God for 1,260 days, the 2nd half of the 70th week.
- John now provides background information to help us understand the woman's flight. (12:7-9)

- In a war between Michael and the dragon, the dragon is defeated with the result that he is confined to the earth.
 - Along with the dragon, Satan, are his angels (demons).
- With the ejection of Satan, we see announced the initiation of God's taking back all control from Satan. (12:10)
 - This is apparently fully realized at the sounding of the 7th trumpet. (11:15)
- The one who has accused "our brothers" has been conquered. His defeat is a cause for rejoicing. (12:11-12)
 - But it's a woe to those on the earth.
- It is because the dragon has been thrown down that he pursues the woman. (12:13)
- On behalf of the woman who is fleeing, God intervenes as the dragon seeks to destroy her. (12:14-16)
- Finally, recognizing God's protection for the woman in the wilderness, the dragon turns to "make war on the rest of her offspring." (12:17).
 - These "offspring" are the remaining Jews still spread among the nations.

The First Beast – 13:1-10

John sees a beast rising out of the sea. This beast from the sea represents both the Antichrist and his kingdom. Beyond Revelation, this beast is mentioned numerous times in both Testaments.

- John sees a beast from the sea that has ten horns and seven heads and 10 diadems. (13:1)
 - The 10 horns apparently represent 10 kings associated with the beast. Cf. Daniel 2:40-43; 7:7, 8, 24.
 - The 7 heads represent 7 world empires. Cf. list above on 12:3.
 - However, the beast itself will sometimes represent the 7th empire, an empire that leads to an 8th one.
- John describes the character of the beast and the power that has been given to it (13:2).
 - The description is very much like the first three beasts described by Daniel (Daniel 7:4-6).
- As John focuses on the 7th head, he describes it as having a "mortal wound" that has healed. (13:3)
 - As a kingdom, the 7th form (regional) will transition to an 8th form (global).

- As a king, the Antichrist will suffer a “mortal” wound that is healed.
 - Perhaps this is some sort of “resurrection” at which “the whole earth marveled.”
- Those on the earth worship both the dragon (Satan) and the beast (Antichrist). (13:4)
 - MacArthur notes that this worship of Satan may be carried out “wittingly or unwittingly.” In either case, they are worshipping both.
- Even though the beast is boastful and profane in his speaking against God, he is given authority. (13:5-6)
 - As evidenced by the “forty-two months,” it is God who sovereignly permits him to have authority.
 - His authority permits him to war on and conquer the saints. (13:7)
 - His authority extends over the entire earth. (13:7)
- As a result of his position, all those on the entire earth will worship him. (13:8)
 - That is, all except the elect.
- At this point John addresses his readers and issues a call for endurance and faith (13:9-10)
 - With these words of comfort, saints are encouraged to “hold on” and to “keep the faith,” knowing that God’s plans will be accomplished.
- Through these deceptive signs, the 2nd has an image of the 1st beast created.
- This 2nd beast “was allowed to give breath to the image.” (13:15)
 - “Was allowed” by whom? Directly, most likely by Satan, but ultimately, by God.
 - The image has the appearance of being alive.
 - It this image alive? Probably no, but perhaps yes. And, even if “alive,” it would not be human.
- This 2nd beast “causes all ... to be marked.” (13:16-17)
 - This mark determines who can transact business, buying or selling.
 - This will make it difficult for believers (and any others) who will not accept this mark.
 - This mark is “the name of the [1st] beast or the number of its name.” This number is stated in 13:18.
 - The “mark” could be a tattoo or an RFID tag or both, or something else.
- Like 13:9-10, John addresses his readers. Here he issues a call for wisdom. (13:18)
 - This call involves understanding the number of the 1st beast.
 - We must accept that “the one who has understanding” does not include us today. It will make sense to those living at that time.
 - That number is “the number of a man, and his number is 666.”
 - What is the significance of this number? There have been many guesses. Simply stated, today no one knows. But we don’t need to know.

The Second Beast – 13:11-18

John sees a beast rising out of the land. This 2nd beast, after this chapter 13, is known as the False Prophet. Unlike the 1st beast, this beast does not seem to be mentioned outside of the book of Revelation.

- John sees a beast rising from the land having two horns and speaking like a dragon. (13:11)
- This 2nd beast exercises authority derived from the 1st beast. (13:12)
 - Using this authority, he forces the world to worship the 1st beast.
- This 2nd beast can perform great signs (13:13-14)
 - This includes “making fire come down from heaven.”
 - These signs are performed “in the presence of the [1st] beast.” Cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 where signs are associated with “the lawless one.”

Note: All references are to the book of Revelation unless otherwise specified.