God’s Victory Has Been Won

Revelation 12:1-9

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Natural Divisions** | * Revelation 12:1-4 The sign of a pregnant woman clothed with the sun appeared in heaven, and a huge red dragon with seven heads stood ready to devour her child the moment it was born.
* Revelation 12:5-6 The son that was born was the one who will rule with an iron scepter, and He was snatched up to His heavenly throne, while the woman fled to a place of refuge for 1260 days.
* Revelation 12:7-9 A great spiritual battle in heaven resulted in defeat for Satan and his demons, and Satan was hurled out of heaven and thrown to the earth.
 |
| **Summary Sentence** | The sign is given of the glorious woman giving birth to the great king and being protected by God from the destructive designs of the devil.  |
| **Central Idea** |  God’s victory has already been won. |

As we’ve been studying the book of Revelation this year, we’ve all agreed several times that this world is not the way it’s supposed to be. We’ve all been hurt at times in our lives; we’ve all been damaged by the sins of others—we’ve been damaged by our *own* sinful behavior. We observe how the world operates, and we see that normal day-to-day dealings among people are tainted by sin, by deception, by selfishness.

It would be nice if we could wave a magic wand and sin would be gone, but we can’t do that. We’re trapped, for the moment, in a world that’s corrupted by sin.

But the Bible tells us that it won’t always be that way. One day our world will be cleansed of sin. One day our world will be re-created, and the new world that’s coming will be perfect. One day Jesus will return; He will establish His eternal Kingdom, and we will live under His loving rule, enjoying the presence of God forever.

The book of Revelation assures that indeed this new world is coming. The book of Revelation assures us that one day God will make all things right.

But we wonder: why do things continue as they are? Is there something else that has to be accomplished before God is able to bring His Kingdom? Is there something else that Jesus must do in order to accomplish the final victory over sin? Is God’s plan in any way at risk?

In Revelation chapter 12, we learn that God’s victory over evil is already a done deal. We learn that there is nothing that can happen to thwart God’s good plan for the future. We are not yet the people we will be, but God will surely bring His Kingdom, and Jesus is able to deliver us faultless before His throne.

Open your Bibles to Revelation chapter 12. Revelation 12 takes us back to the first century. Revelation 12 affirms for us a victory that has already happened in the past. We see here that in Revelation 12 that **God’s victory has already been won**.

Let’s do a quick review of what the Bible teaches about the coming of sin into the world. How did man become corrupted by sin in the first place? What is the origin of sin, and what is its nature?

In the first chapters of the book of Genesis, we learn that God’s original creation was perfect. God created a universe that was absolutely good. When God created man, the first man and woman were innocent. They had not been tainted by sin.

But then Adam and Eve listened to the voice of the Tempter, and they chose to disobey God. That first act of disobedience was called the Fall of man, and because of the Fall, everything changed.

As a result of the Fall, decay and death entered the world. As a result of the Fall, mankind was changed spiritually, and now sin is an inherent part of our nature. As a result of the Fall, man’s relationship with God was broken, and we are separated from God. We no longer have the fellowship with God we were designed to enjoy.

Who was this creature—this Tempter—who did such damage to God’s creation? This creature is called the serpent. He’s called the devil. He’s called Satan, and here in Revelation 12, he’s portrayed as a fearsome red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns.

After the Fall of man, it seemed that the Tempter had won an evil victory in God’s world, but not for long.

From the very beginning, God had a plan to reverse the effects of the fall. Right after the Fall of man, in Genesis 3:15, God confronted Satan, and God said *"…I will put enmity between you, Satan, and the woman. And between your seed and hers. He—the offspring of the woman—will crush your head, but you will bruise his heel."*

God announced to Satan what God would surely do. God would send a man—an offspring of the woman—the Seed of the woman—and that Man would crush the head of Satan. That man would defeat Satan and destroy him forever.

Now of course, Satan would want to prevent this promised Seed from coming. Of course Satan would array all of his power, all of his forces, all of his cunning in order to prevent that offspring of the woman from being born. But Revelation 12 tells us that Satan was not able to prevent the birth of this divine warrior. Satan was not able to hinder in any way God’s good plan to reverse the Fall, to destroy the devil and establish the Kingdom of God. Revelation tells us that **God’s victory over evil has already been won**.

Look at verses 1-6 of Revelation 12.

We have here a dramatic vision. Look at verses 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. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. 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. 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, 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.”*

There are three main figures here—the woman, the child, and the dragon. In verse 9 we’re told what the dragon represents. Look at verse 9: *“And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world— he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”* The dragon represents the devil. The dragon represents Satan.

The dragon is poised to devour the child the moment it’s born. We know from Genesis that the one child who poses a threat to Satan is the one whom God announced in Genesis 3:15. This is the promised offspring of the woman. This child who is ready to be born is the promised seed who will destroy Satan and his forces.

Who is this male child about to be born? This child is described as One who will rule all nations with a rod of iron. He will be the ruler over all nations. This child will be the King over all the earth.

This description is an allusion to Psalm 2:7-9, where the Scripture says, *“The Lord said to me: ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father. Ask of Me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with a rod of iron; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.’”* It’s the same description.

This male child in Revelation 12 will be the King described in Psalm 2. He will be King over all the ends of the earth. He will be the Son of God. This is Jesus! It’s the birth of Jesus that’s being referred to in Revelation chapter 12!

So Satan is ready to devour the child; Satan is ready to destroy the Savior, but bingo! Satan is defeated. He cannot harm the child. He cannot hinder the plan of God.

In verse 5 we have a remarkable summary of the entire life of Christ. Look at verse 5. *“The woman 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.* We have encapsulated here the birth, the coming Kingdom, and the resurrection and ascension of Christ. As many times as Satan tried to destroy the Son of God, we know that at present our Lord is seated at the right of God. Jesus has been caught up to God and to His throne. It may have appeared that Satan had defeated Jesus at the cross, but we know that Christ’s death was in fact the defeat of Satan.

Back in Revelation chapter 6, we learned that Jesus was worthy to open the scroll because by His blood—by His death—He purchased for God men and women from every tribe and language and people and nation. The crucifixion that appeared to be Satan’s victory was in fact Satan’s defeat. The crucifixion that appeared to be the silencing of the Kingdom was in fact the enabling of the Kingdom.

So the dragon is Satan; the victorious male child is Jesus; so who is the woman?

Many scholars consider that the woman to represent Mary. It is, after all, Mary who gave birth to Jesus. Many other scholars consider the woman to represent the nation of Israel—ethnic Israel.

In Genesis chapter 37, Jacob’s son Joseph had a dream. In this dream, Joseph had a vision of the sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowing down to him, and when Joseph told the dream to his father Jacob, Jacob understood that in the dream, the sun represented Jacob and the moon represented Joseph’s mother, and the stars were Joseph’s brothers. The similarities of these visions are striking.

However, the identity of the woman is explained more explicitly and straightforwardly in verse 17 of chapter 12. Look ahead at verse 17. *“Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”*

So the *“rest of the offspring”* of the woman are not Jews—they’re not the nation of Israel; the offspring of the woman are those who hold to the testimony of Jesus. The offspring of the woman are the people of faith. They are believers.

Furthermore, in Romans 8:29 we are told that as God completes the work of transforming people of faith into the image of His Son, that Jesus is then the firstborn among many brothers. The offspring of the woman would also be the brothers and sisters of Jesus. They’re the people who are related to Jesus by faith. In the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament, it is *faith* that signifies being a part of the family of God; it’s not being born a Jew.

So I believe that the woman represents more than just Mary; she represents more than the physical nation of Israel; she represents the people of faith, down through the ages.

The intent of Revelation chapter 12 verse 6 is to explain Satan’s persecution against the believing community, not persecution toward the nation of Israel. The intent of Revelation chapter 12 is to explain the ongoing hostility of the dragon against the people of faith—the rest of the offspring of the woman.

With these concepts in mind, let’s look again at the great sign that appeared in heaven. This is a dazzling sight. John sees a pregnant woman, *“clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet,”* and she is wearing a victor’s crown of twelve stars. She represents the people of faith from both the Old Testament and the New Testament, and she is already victorious.

The woman—the people of faith—bring forth a male child—the Savior, the Redeemer, the Judge of the earth, the future eternal King. The dragon—the devil—is poised to devour this child; but he’s unable to do so. This offspring of the woman was indeed slain, but His death was a victory. By His blood he purchased for God people from every tribe and language and people and nation. This offspring of the woman—the Savior—ascends to God’s throne, and one day He will return to destroy the devil and to reign forever in the coming Kingdom of God.

But what about the woman? What about the people of faith after His ascension? Verse 6 says that God provides spiritual refuge for the people of faith. Look at verse 6: *“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.”* It’s interesting that the entire passage has been in past tense but in this verse the provision of the place and the nourishing by God is in the present tense, which indicate an ongoing reality. This woman—the people of faith—have a place prepared by God and they are being nourished for 1260 days.

The term *wilderness* doesn’t sound very inviting to us, but it carries the connotation of *a place of spiritual refuge*. It would be better to read it as *“the woman fled to a place of spiritual refuge—a place prepared by God—in which she is to be nourished for 1260 days.”* God provides a spiritual refuge for the people of faith. God nourishes and protects His people of faith, and the devil is not able to defeat them. **God’s victory is already won; God’s spiritual protection of His people is perfect**.

There is a time period given here—1260 days. We’ve seen this time period before. 1260 days is the same as 42 months. It’s the same as 3½ years. It’s the same as time, times, and half a time.

What does this time period represent? Some suggest that this represents 3½ years at the end of the age just prior to the return of Christ. This would be 3½ years of great tribulation—great suffering that comes on the earth during the final judgment events.

But it’s awkward to consider that in verse 5, this woman represents giving birth to the Savior in the first century, and then in verse 6 the same woman represents God’s protection for people of faith at the end of the age. So there are different views.

Some scholars consider the 3½ years to refer to a literal 3½ year future time of tribulation; other scholars consider this unusual time frame to symbolically represent the entire age of the church—from the ascension of Christ until His future return to establish His Kingdom. There’s good scholarly support for both views.

But everyone agrees that this vision in Revelation 12 of the woman giving birth is a confirmation that **God’s victory over Satan is already won**. Jesus has already by His blood purchased for God men and women from every tribe and language and people and nation. The people of faith are already being nourished and provided for by God, out of the reach of Satan’s power. God protects His people, and the devil is not able to defeat them.

Now look at verses 7-9. *“Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but the dragon was defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world— he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”*

What does this mean?

Notice first that we are back in the first century here. This is not a future event; it’s a past event. It’s not an ongoing event; it’s a completed event. It doesn’t follow the events of verse 5; it occurs at the same time as the events of verse 5. This is a war that was completed and won by the death and resurrection of Christ.

You can see that in verses 10 and 11. Look at verses 10 and 11 (and we’ll visit this again next week).

*“Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: ‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ.* (How did this come about?) *For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night* (that’s Satan)*, has been hurled down. They overcame him* (how did they overcome him?) *by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.’”*

This war in heaven is over! This war was won by the death and resurrection of Christ. The people of faith have overcome Satan, not by their power, but by the blood of the Lamb.

This spiritual conflict between Michael’s angels and the devil’s angels is a spiritual conflict that has already been won. This conflict was a part of Satan’s efforts to destroy the offspring of the woman. This spiritual conflict was a part of Satan’s efforts to bring condemnation to the people of faith.

We don’t have to worry about that because the devil has no grounds for accusing the people of faith. The devil has no grounds for accusing the people of faith because Christ paid the penalty for our sins. As a result of Christ’s death and resurrection, the devil no longer has grounds for accusation, and Satan has been cast out of heaven. The accuser is no longer accusing the people of faith.

Revelation 12 assures us that Satan has been defeated. The Savior has come. The Lamb of God has been slain. Christ’s blood has been shed, and we have nothing to fear. **God’s victory has already been won**, and one day God will assuredly make all things right. One day, Jesus will come to judge the wicked and to welcome the people of faith into His eternal Kingdom.

Let’s close in prayer.