

LESSON 1

THE WOMAN AND THE DRAGON

THE CHILD IS BORN (12:1–6)

In the closing verses of chapter 11, the seventh trumpet sounded; the time for judgment had come. We might think that the seven bowls of wrath would be introduced next, but that series is postponed until chapters 15 and 16. Instead, in chapters 12 through 14, the enemies of God and Christ are introduced.

Chapter 12 is pivotal. Scholars generally agree that it commences the second main division of Revelation. The first half of the book has been primarily concerned with the conflict between the church and Rome, while the second half will focus more on the battle behind the scene: the spiritual warfare between Christ and Satan, the conflict between good and evil.

1. How does John use the word “sign” in his writings?
2. Of all the details of the woman’s appearance in verse 1, which two are significant?
3. Who or what does the woman represent?
4. How does each detail about the dragon add to the total impact of the picture of the dangerous enemy?
5. What is the meaning behind the “one thousand two hundred and sixty days” of verse 6?

SATAN IS THROWN DOWN FROM HEAVEN (12:7–9)

In this passage, the defeat of Satan is first seen in symbols (vv. 7–9); in the next section it is celebrated in song (vv. 10–12). In verses 7 through 9, “heaven” probably refers to the special abode of God.

6. What commonly held belief about Satan does 12:7–9 not actually teach?
7. What few hints does the Bible give regarding this subject?
8. Who is Michael, and what role does he play in Scripture?
9. What lesson can we learn from the statement “they were not strong enough” (12:8)?
10. How did Satan’s defeat in this passage fulfill Genesis 3:5?
11. What does the phrase “there was no longer a place found for Satan. . . in heaven” (12:8) mean?
12. What do the terms “the devil” and “Satan” mean, and how are they different from each other?

A VOICE IN HEAVEN (12:10–12)

Verses 10 through 12 celebrate the devil’s defeat. John wrote, “Then I heard a loud voice in heaven.” The voice first announced the fruits of victory. The heavenly voice then proclaimed Satan’s defeat.

13. What were the primary and secondary sources of victory, according to verse 11?
14. Having been defeated, in what way is the devil still dangerous?

THE DRAGON AT WAR WITH THE WOMAN (12:13–17)

The Book of Revelation tells of the war that Christians are fighting in 12:13–17: “So the dragon was enraged . . . and went off to *make war* with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (v. 17; emphasis added). The passage begins with a battle that the devil can never win.

15. How is the phraseology of verse 14 reminiscent of Israel’s deliverance out of Egypt?
16. How would a Jew have described the wilderness associated with the Exodus?
17. From where might the imagery of the flood in 12:15 have come?
18. What might be the significance of the earth swallowing the flood (12:16)?
19. Who are “her children” (12:17), and what does this passage suggest about their vulnerability?
20. How does Satan “make war” with believers?