

The Revelation of Jesus Christ – 23

Revelation 12:1-6 – The Players are Introduced

1. John sees the first act in a drama covering chapters 12-14
2. **Then a great sign** - A 'sign' must be "interpreted", and not be taken literally; but we must let the Bible interpret the sign
3. **appeared in heaven**: - Heaven is the 'stage' on which a series of dramas will unfold that will describe the significance of the final events of this age.
4. **a woman clothed with the sun, and with the moon under her feet, and on her head was a crown of twelve stars.** – In Genesis 37:9-11 the Bible clearly identifies the woman as Israel
5. **She was pregnant and was screaming in labor pains, in torment as she was giving birth.** – She is in obvious pain, referring to the painful history of Israel up to the birth of Jesus
6. **Then another sign appeared in heaven:** - Notice how carefully John indicates when he is using symbolism
7. **a huge red dragon** – Who is the dragon? Verse 9
8. **that had seven heads and ten horns, and on its heads were seven diadems.** – Remember, things appear in the spiritual realm according to their true character and intended purpose – see Isaiah 14:12-15 and 28:11-15
 - a. **Seven heads** – The 'head' is the seat of cunning – Satan is 'the most cunning' – see Genesis 3:1 and Ezekiel 28:12
 - b. **Ten horns** – Horns are a symbol of strength - Satan has great power (John 12:31 – but Jesus is more powerful)
 - c. **Seven diadems** – Diadems are worn only by kings, reflecting Satan's position as 'the god this world (or age)' – 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Luke 4:5-6
9. **Now the dragon's tail swept away a third of the stars in heaven and hurled them to the earth.** – No wonder the Bible considers rebellion so serious a sin (see 1 Samuel 15:23)
10. **Then the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child as soon as it was born.** – By devouring the Baby, Satan hopes to overthrow God Himself (John 3:14-15, 10:17-18, 12:27)
11. **So the woman gave birth to a son, a male child, who is going to rule over all the nations with an iron rod.** – This child is obviously Jesus – see Revelation 2:27 and 19:15 as well as Psalm 2:9, Daniel 2:44
12. **Her child was suddenly caught up to God and to his throne,** -
 - a. God is not saying Jesus was taken to heaven as a baby; He is saying that the Child is His Son, and He would protect Jesus until the work was done – the dragon's hopes of devouring the child are dashed (see John 7:30, 8:20 – also passages like Luke 4:29-30, John 8:59, Matthew 2:13-18)
 - b. Caught up – the exact same word used of the Rapture of the living in 1 Thessalonians 4:17; implies that the 'catching up' will include those who belong to Jesus – not at the same time but with the same intention
13. **and she fled into the wilderness where a place had been prepared for her by God, so she could be taken care of for 1,260 days.** – described further in the second part of the chapter; These are literal days; matching other periods of the same length at the same point in history here and elsewhere in the Bible (1,260 days – here and Revelation 11:3; 42 months – Revelation 11:2, 13:5; 3½ years – (time, times, half a time) Daniel 7:25, 12:7; Revelation 12:14)
14. **This ends part one of the "drama" or 'sign' being acted out in the heavens** – next week part two will cover the rest of chapter 12 – which will fill in some gaps from today
15. **What is God saying to all believers in this passage?**
 - a. **The Bible, made up of 66 books, tells one story** – the story of the Grace of God in saving sinners through the sacrifice of His own Son Jesus. If we let the Bible teach, we will see that it 'speaks with one voice'; The questions it raises, it answers – if we let the Bible be its own interpreter and resist drawing our own conclusions from logic or from our own biases
 - b. **Pay attention to symbols**, but let the Bible interpret them; they are intentional and help us understand the significance of the various characters involved
 - c. **Satan is our sworn enemy**, but Jesus has defeated him, and Jesus' victory is our victory; as God protected Jesus He will also protect us. As the hymn says regarding Satan, "His rage we can endure, for – lo! – his doom is sure. One little word shall fell him." What is that 'little word'? Luther himself says, the word is Jesus. And by the way, he adds, 'No!' is also effective! (James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:9)