

In spite of his ominous size and threatening demeanor, this passage exposes the dragon as a **triple-failure**. Let's examine the three main characters in this cosmic drama.

B. The Child. Who is this baby boy?

He is destined "to rule all the nations with a rod of iron" (v. 5). Such a reference points clearly to **the Messiah** (see Psalm 2:9; Rev. 2:27; 19:15). Interestingly, nothing is said about Jesus' life, ministry, or death on a cross! Rather, we read only of Messiah's **birth** and then his **ascension**² to heaven (v. 5). Obviously, John has another purpose in mind than to tell the story of the baby. His focus is rather the dragon and the woman.

This child is the one Isaiah had prophesied: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the **government** shall be upon his shoulder..." (Isaiah 9:6-7). When Jesus came the first time, most didn't realize who he was. And though Revelation 12 mentions him only briefly, don't worry: he'll **be back soon!** And when he comes again, no one anywhere will have any doubts about his true identity (see 19:11-16).

Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. (1:7).

C. The Dragon. Who is this monster and why is he so intent on killing a baby?

1. What he is like? What is his name? Who is he?
 - a. He is great (enormous) and **red** (v. 3).
 - b. He has **7 heads** with 7 crowns (v. 3). Thus, he's hard to kill.
 - c. He has **10 horns** (v. 3). The horn is the symbol of strength.
 - d. He has a huge and destructive tail (v. 4).
 - e. He is **furious** (vv. 12, 17). He has been kicked out of heaven, he failed to kill the baby³ or the mother, and he knows his time is short. He is really upset!

Perhaps his names and descriptive titles give us the clearest clue to his true identity:

- That ancient **serpent** (v. 9).
- The **devil** (v. 9). The word *diabolos* means "to accuse", "to slander."
- **Satan** (v. 9). The word means "adversary."
- The **deceiver** of the whole world (v. 9).
- The **accuser** of our brothers, who accuses them day and night before our God (v. 10).

When King Herod tried to kill baby Jesus (Matthew 2:16-18), there was more going on than a jealous and insecure tyrant practicing ethnic cleansing!

² Verse 5 says literally that he was "caught up" to God (snatched up). It is the same term used in I Thessalonians 4:17 to describe the "rapture" of the saints.

³ When Jesus died on the cross, for three days the dragon thought he had won. But then Jesus was literally "snatched" out of his clutches!

2. What is his story?

Inserted in the story of the dragon's war on the woman and her child, is a kind of **prequel** (vv. 7–12). When the dragon (Lucifer) rebelled against God, Michael and his angels fought against the demonic army (perhaps a third of the heavenly host, see v. 4) and **cast them out** of heaven. (See Ezek. 28:12–17; Isa. 14:12–15; Luke 10:18).

3. What does he do?

The dragon has one primary goal: destroy the child (v. 4). When he fails, he goes into a rage and **declares war** on the woman and her offspring (the people of God, the church). This passage exposes for all to see the **strategy** of the dragon⁴ in his war against the saints (12:17; 13:7):

- a. **Deception** (see v. 9). Ever since the serpent tempted Eve in the Garden, Satan's primary tactic has been to tell lies, **half-truths**, and fabrications. "Did God really say, 'You shall not eat of any tree?'" "You will not die!" (Gen. 3:1, 4).
- b. **Condemnation**. (See v. 10. See Job 1:6–11; Zech. 3:1). Like an expert **prosecuting** attorney, Satan constantly gathers evidence to show what sinful, miserable failures we really are. Unless we can find a better attorney, we don't have a chance (I John 2:1–2; Romans 8:33–35).
- c. **Intimidation**. Satan is filled with fury because he knows his time is short (See vv. 12, 17). So he seeks to do as much damage as possible in the short time allotted to him. Thus, his ferocity and cruelty are only a **camouflage** for the reality that he is already doomed!

D. The Woman. Who is this woman?

The woman represents far more than Mary. She is a symbol of the people of God, the new Israel, the **church**. Just as Jesus was born out of Israel⁵, so now the woman has other offspring who are the people of God. This godly woman is in sharp contrast to "the great **prostitute**" we are going to meet later (ch. 17, etc.). She will finally be seen as the **bride** of Christ, prepared for her wedding day (Rev. 19–22). Because the dragon was unable to destroy the child (Jesus), he now unleashes all his fury against the church!

III. What the Story of Cosmic Christmas Means for You and for Me.

A. This world is a **battleground** not an amusement park.

If you belong to Jesus Christ, beware! The dragon has declared war against you (12:17; 13:7). Those who think life is a party, will find it difficult to understand why all hell is breaking loose around them.⁶ But though Satan unleashes a **flood** of evil against you (see vv. 15–16), he will not be able to destroy you (see Isaiah 43:1–2).

B. Your life has **cosmic** significance.

Your life matters! In fact, the future of the universe is to some degree being determined by how you choose to live your life: serving the Lamb or the Beast. The

⁴ In warfare, if you know your enemy's strategy, it becomes very easy to defeat him.

⁵ Notice that the woman wore a crown of 12 stars (v. 1), symbolizing undoubtedly the 12 tribes of Israel.

⁶ Remember the expression "life's a beach"? That's correct: Omaha Beach at Normandy!

destiny of the world is hanging in the balance and you can make a difference in which way it goes.

C. How to be an **overcomer**. Verse 11 gives us three essential keys to victory:

They overcame (conquered) him (the dragon) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death (v. 11. NIV).

1. The **blood** of the Lamb. We don't stand a chance against the accusations of Satan and the condemnation we deserve, without the blood! "There is therefore now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).
2. The word of their **testimony**. To live the victorious life, we must go public with our witness. We must name the Name before others. We must confess with our mouth that "**Jesus is Lord**" (Romans 10:9-10).
3. They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from **death**. The Greek word for witness is *martus*. By definition, to be a witness is to be ready to lay down your life for what you believe. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said it well; "When Christ calls a man, he bids him **come and die**."

*Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;
the body they may kill; God's truth abideth still;
his kingdom is forever (Martin Luther).*

TABLE TALK

1. How does this passage help you to better understand Christmas?
2. What has this lesson taught you about Satan (the dragon)? What has it taught you about the Church?
3. Which of Satan's tactics (deception, condemnation, intimidation) has been most successful against the American church? Against you as an individual believer?
4. Why is it so difficult to be a witness for Jesus in the public arena? What can you do to be more effective in naming the Name?
5. Describe a situation in your life right now in which it feels like evil is rolling over you like a flood. Ask your group to pray for you to be an overcomer.