

Sooke Baptist Church
Sunday, May 2, 2021
9am, Face Book and YouTube

And There Was War in Heaven

Revelation 12

Coffee/Question:

Sadly, war is a reality of the human experience. What thoughts or reactions do you have to the news of Revelation 12:7 that there was war in heaven?



REVELATION
11:19-12:17

This chapter contains incredibly vivid imagery.

Revelation 11:19-12:6

- The temple in heaven
- The ark of the covenant
- A woman clothed with the sun and standing upon the moon wearing a crown of twelve stars.
- An enormous seven headed red dragon who wears a crown on each of his heads; who also has ten horns.
- The birth of a male child whom the dragon tries to kill.
- The child born to the woman is snatched up to God.
- The woman flees into the desert.

We are at a pivotal juncture in the book of Revelation.
Beginning here in chapter 12 the reader is explicitly told of an unseen reality that explains life in the here and now.

This unseen reality is summarized by the statement made in verse 7 –



It was a war which heaven won.
But when evil was driven out of heaven it came to the earth.
Evil found an ally in the human race.

But heaven had purposed in eternity past that there would be no ground ceded.
As was the case in heaven, so it will be on the earth –



We are reminded in the Revelation that belonging to the church of Jesus is not...



... a spectator sport.

Our first parents opened the door to sin and evil.

We would have done the same if we were them.

But because of the kindness and the mercy and the love of God we have been saved by grace through faith in Christ alone.

And now we participate with God in driving out the very ones our first parents unwittingly invited in.

The church of Jesus moves with their Savior in heaven's final conquest of the dragon and his angels.

In this present time, we are learning crucial skills... as we undergo character transformation.

Our time on earth is making us ready to be restored to the responsibility which was entrusted to our first parents – to be the stewards of creation on God's behalf.

Let's begin to unpack the details of this vision.

For today, we will focus on the first six verses.

There are four main characters in Revelation 12

- The woman.
- The dragon.
- The child of the woman.
- The offspring of the woman.

Who is the woman?

Gerhard Krodel writes, “The woman in this vision is a complex symbol.” p.237.

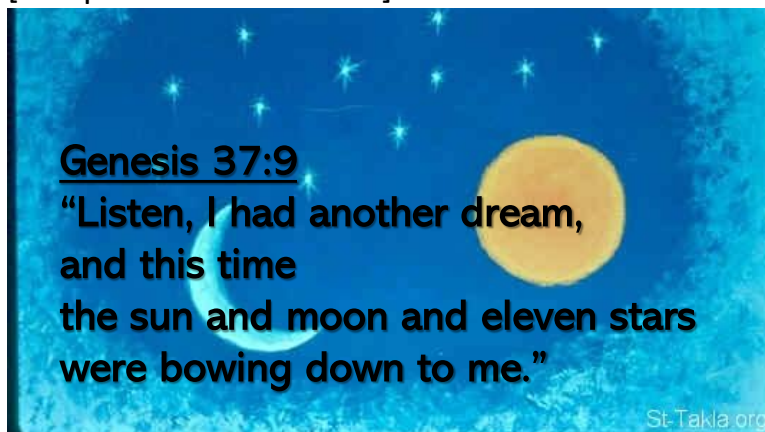
Tom Wright says, “She is not a literal mother.” p.107.

The fact that John describes her as a “great and wondrous sign,” means that the woman points the reader to a greater reality.

GK Beale says that the woman is a picture of the faithful community, before and after the coming of Christ. p.243

Describing here as being clothed with the sun, standing on the moon, wearing a crown of twelve stars points the reader to the dream of Joseph...

[Joseph told his brothers] ...



In Joseph’s dream, the sun, moon and eleven stars metaphorically represent Joseph’s father, Israel, his mother, Rachel, and his brothers, eleven of the tribes of Israel who bow down to Joseph the twelfth.

The Song of Songs appeals to this same metaphor when the question is asked:

**“Who is this that appears like the dawn,
fair as the moon, bright as the sun,
majestic as the stars in procession?”**

Song of Songs 6:10

The answer is... the people of God.

In Revelation 17, the reader is introduced to another woman, Babylon, who is identified as “the great prostitute.”

This woman and the woman identified in chapter 12, are symbolic of two very different human communities – the one in alliance with the dragon and the other in alliance with God.

Who is the dragon?

The fact that John describes the dragon in v.3, as another sign, means that the dragon too is a symbol that points the reader to a greater reality.

To figure out who or what the dragon symbolizes, let’s review what the reader is told about him in verses 3-4.

The dragon...

- is enormous
- is red
- has seven heads
- has ten horns
- wears seven crowns
- his tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth



The dragon’s size speaks of the scope of his influence – in this present time it is worldwide.

The dragon’s color, red, according to crosswalk.com, symbolizes war, destruction and above all, bloodshed.

His seven heads and seven crowns are symbols of his authority.
His horns are symbols of his strength.
His tail is a symbol of his malice that God permits him to exercise... a malice that touches what is precious to God.

All this to say... this adversary of the woman, portrayed as a dragon, is an adversary who is fierce.

But what is the dragon symbolic of?

We need to jump ahead to v.9 which clearly explains –

...that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

Revelation 12:9

The dragon represents the devil and those angels who sided with him.

Look at who the Bible says the devil once was.

Ezekiel 28:11-17

¹¹ The word of the LORD came to me: ¹² “Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: “You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. ¹³ You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you... ¹⁴ You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God...

Ezekiel 28:11-17

...you walked among the fiery stones. ¹⁵ You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you...

So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. ¹⁷ Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth...

The devil was created by God as...a guardian cherub. He was blameless, he was perfect in wisdom and beauty, he was given from God great authority and strength.

But his heart became proud because of his beauty and splendor. He desired to be as God... look at Isaiah 14...

Isaiah 14:12-14

How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth... ¹³ You said in your heart...

"I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. ¹⁴ I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."

This guardian cherub... corrupted himself by his ambition... and he proceeded to persuade other holy angels... to join him and fight with him in his attempted coup.

In the first scene of Revelation 12, verses 1-6, the Spirit reveals to the reader that the heart of the dragon is cruel and vicious.

He positions himself to devour a newborn child.

Who is the child?

Verse 5 explains – he is a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre.

There is a significant detail we must take note of.
The text does not say that the child is a sign.
The woman is a sign.
The dragon is a sign.
But the child is not.

Darryl Johnson says, “The child does not point beyond himself to another reality – he is the reality.” p.221

We will never encounter a literal woman clothed in the sun standing on the moon wearing a crown of twelve stars.

We will never encounter a literal seven headed dragon, who wears a crown on each head.

But there is a male child – who was born to rule all the nations.

We know the name of this child – his name is Jesus.

The angel told his mother’s fiancé, Joseph, that the child conceived in Mary would save his people from their sins – Matthew 1:21.

Jesus is the long-anticipated descendant of Adam and Eve who would rescue.

He is the king foretold in Psalm 2 who would rule all the nations with a scepter of iron – Revelation 12:5.

What does it mean to rule with an iron scepter?

Revelation 2:26-27 explains.

Revelation 2:26-27

To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, **I will give authority** over the nations –

that one ‘will rule them with an iron scepter and will dash them to pieces like pottery’

– just as **I have received authority** from my Father.

The iron scepter represents authority.

When was this authority given to Jesus?

Echoing Psalm 2:7... at his baptism the Father announced to Jesus in the presence of all who were there that day...

**"You are my Son, whom I love;
with you I am well pleased."**

Mark 1:11

But the scepter was not placed in Jesus' hands until after his ascension – see Philippians 2:6-11.

At this present time Jesus is at the Father's right hand in heaven. From there he rules over heaven and earth.

Who is the woman who fled into the wilderness?

She represents the people of God after the ascension of Jesus.

Where does she now live?

Look at v.6 – in the wilderness...in a place prepared for her by God.

As I read these words, I thought of what Jesus said to his followers in John 14:2...

**"I am going to
prepare a place
for you."**

- Jesus

When it comes to life after death, Jesus simply described it as living in his Father's home in a place he has prepared for us.

But what about our days here on the earth?



Unlike her child, the woman was not snatched up to God.

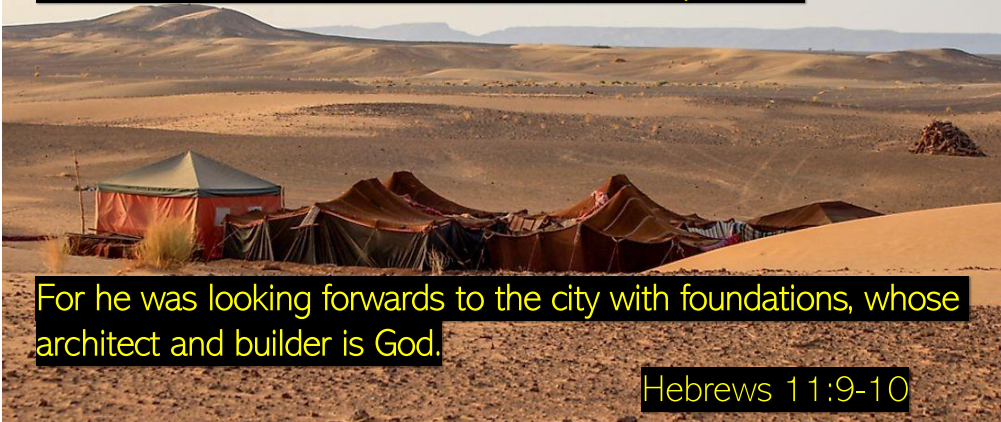
But neither was she forgotten.

Here on the earth, she lives in a place which is also prepared for her by God.

In the wilderness she is taken care of by God.

Abraham's experience beautifully illustrates the life of all who follow God.

By faith [Abraham] made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.



For he was looking forwards to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

Hebrews 11:9-10

Several verses later the writer said this of the people of God, v.13, 16...

...they admitted they were aliens and strangers on earth...They were longing for a better country – a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

The hope of God's people... is not just in the future.

We have a strong hope in this present time.

Where we live... right now... is a place prepared for us by God.

Verse 6 points the reader back to the exodus of the nation of Israel and their journey through the desert for 40 years.

For the nation of Israel, the desert was a barren place in comparison to the land which they would ultimately live in.

But it was nonetheless a place prepared for them by God.

There ...God provided for them.

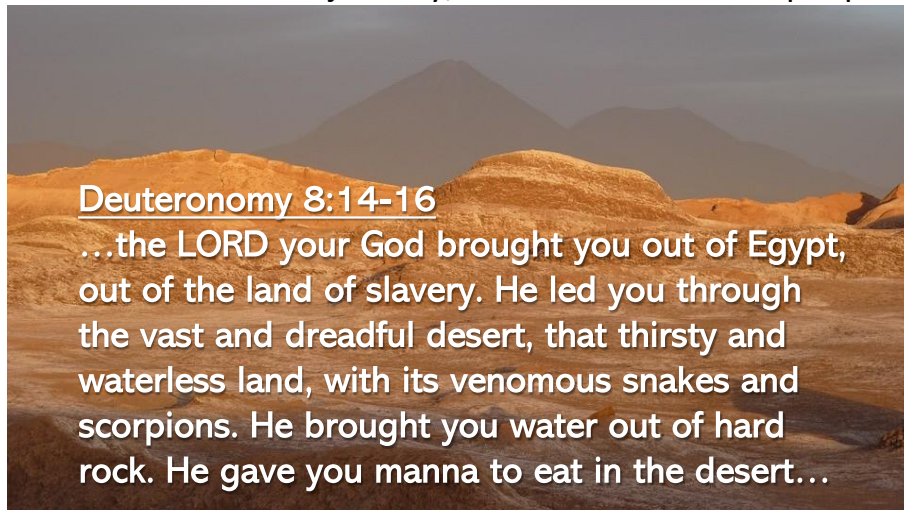
There ...God protected them.

There ...God sustained them.

There ...God made them ready to live in the promised land.

Their experience reminds us of the faithfulness of God to his people in every generation... of the faithfulness of God to us.

At the end of Israel's journey; Moses reminded the people of their testimony.



This in a similar way is and will be our testimony.

...the presence of God;

...the grace of God;

...the provision and protection of God.