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Revelation 12-13: Dragon and the Two Beasts

6-Min. Video Overview

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Alright, today we are jumping into one of the most intense and, let's be honest, strangest visions in the entire Bible. We're talking about the cosmic throwdown in Revelation chapters 12 and 13. You've got dragons, a woman clothed with the sun, war in heaven, and we're going to figure out what on earth it all means.

I mean, the vision kicks off with some truly wild imagery. There's this majestic woman about to give birth, and there's a giant, seven-headed red dragon just waiting to eat her baby. Oh, and then a war breaks out in heaven.

It sounds like something from a fantasy epic, but it's not. It's actually a coded message. So let's crack the code.

Okay, so first things first, we've got to understand what we're even reading. This is what's called apocalyptic literature. Now when we hear that word, apocalypse, we usually think end of the world, right? But that's not what it means.

It literally means an unveiling or lifting of the veil. The author, John, is basically pulling back the curtain on reality to show his readers what's really going on behind the scenes. And what was behind that curtain? Well, for the first-century church, which was facing some serious persecution from the Roman Empire, this vision completely reframed their world.

It was telling them, "Hey, your struggle with Rome, it's not just about politics. No. Behind the power of Rome is a much older, much bigger enemy, Satan himself.

And this is just the latest battle in his long war against God's people. So you have to wonder, where did John get these specific images? A dragon hunting a mother and her child. He wasn't just pulling this stuff out of thin air.

He was a master storyteller. And he was taking ideas that his audience would have already known from two very different worlds. First up, he pulled from the world all around him, the Greco-Roman world.

And believe it or not, stories with this basic plot were everywhere. You take the myth of the goddess Leto. She's pregnant, and this dragon named Python is chasing her all over the place.

She finally gives birth to the god Apollo, who gets whisked away to safety and, you guessed it, grows up to kill the dragon. Sound familiar? Yeah. John's readers would have picked up on this pattern instantly.

But here's where John does something absolutely brilliant. See, those pagan myths were always set in some distant mythological past, kind of like fairy tales. John takes that same story pattern, but he anchors it to a real, specific moment in history, the birth of Jesus Christ.

He's basically taking a popular story and saying, you know that tale you've all heard? This. This is the true version of it. This is the one that really happened.

Now, as clever as that was, it's not even the main source he was drawing from. There's a much deeper well here. And to really unlock what's going on in this vision, we have to go way, way back, all the way to the first few pages of the Old Testament, to the book of Genesis.

This verse right here, this is the key, Genesis 3.15. It comes right after the serpent tricks Adam and Eve in the garden. And God lays out this prophecy, this promise of a long, bitter conflict, one between the serpent and the woman, and between the serpent's offspring and the woman's offspring. This one little verse is the blueprint for the entire drama we see playing out in Revelation 12.

I mean, once you see it, you can't unsee it. The prophecy talks about conflict between the serpent and the woman? Check. The dragon chases the woman.

It mentions pain and childbirth? Check. The woman cries out in labor. Conflict with her offspring? You bet.

The dragon wages war on them. And just in case anyone missed the connection, John drops the ultimate clue. He literally calls the dragon that ancient serpent.

He's basically screaming, go back and read Genesis 3. Okay, but that brings up a really good question. The Genesis prophecy mentions two sides: the woman's offspring, sure, but also the serpent's offspring. So far in Revelation, we've seen the woman's children: that's Jesus and then the church.

So where's the serpent's crew? Well, the answer is waiting for us in the very next chapter. And boom, there they are in Revelation 13. The serpent's offspring show up, and they are absolutely terrifying.

They take the form of two powerful beasts who get their marching orders directly from the dragon. And the three of them- the dragon and his two beasts- form this kind of dark, twisted parody of the Godhead, an unholy trinity. And the parallel is just chilling when you lay it out.

The dragon, Satan, he plays the part of God the Father. The one giving out authority. The first beast, the one from the sea, is a sick imitation of Jesus Christ.

Just like Christ was the Lamb who was slain and then lived, this beast has a fatal wound that's been miraculously healed. And the second beast is a counterfeit Holy Spirit doing fake miracles and pointing everyone to worship the first beast. It's a complete corruption of the real thing.

So who are these guys in the real world? Well, for the people reading this in the first century, the beast from the sea would have been a no-brainer. It was the Roman Empire and its emperor. For them, Rome was this huge oppressive power that came from across the sea.

And it demanded not just obedience, but worship. And the second beast, the one from the land, was the machinery of control right there in their own backyards. This was the whole system of emperor worship, the local officials, the priests of the imperial cult, all the economic and social pressure that forced people to prove they were loyal to Rome right there on their home turf.

So you see how it all works together. Step one, the dragon, Satan, gives his power to the Roman Empire. Step two, the local emperor cult works on the ground to enforce worship of Rome.

And what's the combined goal? Step three: make war on the woman's offspring, the church. It's the fulfillment of that ancient prophecy from Genesis. Now, just try to imagine what hearing this would have felt like if you were a first-century Christian.

This vision gave them a totally new perspective. Their suffering wasn't just some random, meaningless tragedy. It wasn't a sign that God had forgotten them.

No, it was the latest brutal chapter in a cosmic war that started all the way back in the Garden of Eden. They weren't just fighting Rome. They were on the front lines of a spiritual battle.

But here, here is the most powerful part of the entire message. The vision doesn't just explain the fight. It announces the winner.

That head-crushing blow to the serpent that was promised back in Genesis- John's message is that it already happened. The fatal wound was dealt by Jesus Christ when he died and rose again. And that is why the dragon is so furious in the vision.

He's been defeated. He's been thrown down. He's been mortally wounded.

And he knows he's on the clock. He has only a short time left. So the intense persecution the church was feeling wasn't a sign of the dragon's strength.

It was a sign of his desperation. It was the last angry thrashing of an enemy that had already lost. And that's the ultimate takeaway.

Yes, they were facing the most powerful empire on the planet. But this vision lifted the veil and showed them that the real power behind that empire was a defeated dragon throwing a cosmic temper tantrum. So they could find courage.

They could stand firm. Because they weren't fighting for victory. They were standing on the solid ground of a victory that had already been won.

And that leaves us with one last question to chew on. This ancient vision was all about revealing the story behind the story to give people context and hope in a dark time. And it

makes you wonder: what are the deeper stories playing out in our own conflicts today? And how might our perspective change if we really understood them?