

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Revelation, Session 17, Revelation 11-12 Seventh Trumpet, Woman/dragon/son

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All right, let's dive into Revelation 12. We're going beyond the surface level here, really digging into the symbolism. We're talking about the woman, the dragon, the sun, and how it all speaks to, you know, us even today.

That's a powerful chapter, that's for sure. Full of vivid imagery and layers of meaning. You've got Old Testament references, even echoes of some Greco-Roman myths woven in.

We'll unpack all that and help make sense of it all. So right off the bat, we've got these really striking figures. You've got a woman, and she's adorned with the sun, moon, and 12 stars.

And then there's this dragon, seven heads, 10 horns, the whole bit, pretty terrifying. And then we have a son destined to rule with an iron scepter. It's like a cosmic mystery, right? It really is.

And the clues, well, they're all there. Like any good mystery. Let's take the woman, for instance.

She's not just, you know, a random lady. John, the author, he's using her to symbolize something much bigger: the people of God, you know, through history. So it's not about one woman or even one specific time.

It's this huge representation of the faithful, Jewish and Christian, all connected to God. That's it. And that symbolism is so powerful, because it brings us in as believers.

We're part of that lineage. You know, we become part of this protected body, this community of faith that endures, even with all the opposition. That's a really encouraging thought, especially when you consider what comes next.

I mean, we've got this dragon, seven heads, 10 horns. You know, this isn't some nice little lizard. No, definitely not.

And John, he doesn't leave us hanging. He makes it clear who this dragon is. He uses the Old Testament apocalyptic literature and identifies him as Satan himself, that serpent from Genesis, you know? It's interesting how he uses that image to connect the struggles back then with this whole good versus evil thing.

It's like drawing that line straight through, showing that the battles, you know, back in the first century, they weren't just isolated events, but part of this bigger cosmic struggle since, well, forever. Exactly, and that perspective must have been pretty powerful for the early Christians, facing persecution, all of that. It puts things in a different light, gives their struggles purpose, meaning, you know, even in the midst of their suffering.

For sure. It's a reminder that even today, it's not just earthly powers or personal struggles. We're in a spiritual battle.

It's humbling and also, you know, emboldening. Absolutely. And speaking of battles, the chapter takes us to heaven.

There's a war up there. But it's not God fighting Satan directly. It's the archangel Michael and his angels against the dragon and his forces.

Interesting. Why not God himself? Why wouldn't he fight Satan? Well, it highlights God's sovereignty. Right.

He doesn't have to personally fight. He gives the authority to Michael, a powerful archangel. And Michael, he's more than capable of taking down Satan.

It's like God showing his power, his control over everything. So it's like God saying, there's no real contest here. Exactly.

But even though Michael wins, it's not just brute force. You know, that hymn of praise in verses 10 and 12 makes it clear Satan's defeat ultimately is because of Christ's sacrifice. This cosmic battle, this whole good versus evil thing, it's resolved through Jesus' death and resurrection.

His sacrifice, laying down his life, that's where true victory comes from. That's the core of it. Real power.

It's not about dominating or crushing your enemies. It's self-sacrificial love. Choosing to serve, even when it means suffering, death, all that- it's a theme that pops up throughout Revelation, something we, as believers today, shouldn't forget.

It's a tough message, especially today, where everything's about power and promoting yourself. But knowing that victory has already been won through Christ, that's where the hope comes in. Absolutely.

But here's the twist. Even though Satan's defeated in heaven, he's not done. The chapter tells us he's cast down to earth, filled with rage, knowing his time is short, like a wounded animal lashing out.

Yikes, it's like, what's he going to do next? Who's going to be his target? That's the big question. And the answer, well, it might surprise you. Remember that woman, the one representing God's people? Well, she just had a baby.

And she's got this angry dragon right on her tail. The chapter says she's given eagle's wings to escape into the wilderness, a place of safety and provision. Wow, it's like something out of an action movie.

A vulnerable woman, a newborn, and this terrifying dragon hunting them down. But those eagle's wings, that's a powerful image. It's like divine protection, right? For sure.

The eagle, especially in the Old Testament, is also connected with God's strength and his swiftness. It's almost like God himself swooping in to rescue his people, you know, from danger. And it's not random that it reminds us of the Exodus story, God protecting the Israelites when they escape from Pharaoh.

So it's like John's drawing a parallel between the Israelites leaving Egypt and the church facing persecution. He's saying, like, hey, God's always been faithful. He delivered them then, and he'll deliver them now.

Exactly, hope and continuity, right? God's protection is still at work, even when things seem impossible. And it's interesting: the woman, she goes to the wilderness, a place we often think of as testing, refinement. Makes you think: trials, difficulties, they're tough.

But maybe there are chances for spiritual growth. It's in those wilderness times we really learn to lean on God. Yeah, I like that.

Connects with the woman representing the church, too. Throughout history, the church has been shaped by persecution and hardship; it's those fiery trials that test and purify our faith. But the dragon, he doesn't give up in the wilderness, does he? He tries to drown the woman with a flood of water coming right out of his mouth- pretty disturbing image.

It is. Another layer of symbolism, though, going back to Exodus again, the Red Sea. Remember, it was a barrier, but also a pathway to freedom for the Israelites.

Some Jewish traditions even saw the sea as where a monstrous serpent lived. So the dragon uses water as a weapon; it's almost like a twisted version of that, like the roles are reversed. Wow, so the dragon representing Satan, he's trying to use the very thing that symbolized God's power and deliverance to destroy the woman and her offspring, like twisting God's plan somehow.

That's it. But even that attack fails in the end. The earth opens up and swallows the flood.

God's people, they're tested, but they'll endure. No matter how fierce the attacks, God's protection wins. It reminds me that even when it seems like evil's winning, God's still in control.

He's working behind the scenes, making things work out for his people. I agree, but there's a turn here. The woman, the church, she's safe.

But her offspring, they become the dragon's new target. The offspring, they're the ones who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. Like a shift in focus.

The dragon can't beat the whole church, so he goes after individuals, picking them off one by one. You got it, and it's a serious reminder. The church, as a whole, might win in the end, but individual Christians, they're still going to face trials.

Persecution, even. John, the author, was writing to people going through some really intense persecution from the Roman Empire. So it wasn't just some theoretical thing for them.

This was real. He's giving them hope, encouragement, saying their suffering matters. They're part of this bigger fight, and God's on their side.

Exactly, and that message is just as relevant today, isn't it? We might not face the same kind of persecution, but we all have opposition and challenges to our faith. Revelation 12, it says, hey, you're not alone in this. It's like seeing behind the curtain, right? The spiritual forces working in our lives, in the world.

And knowing that, it's powerful and comforting. But you mentioned earlier, Revelation 12, it pulls from some Greco-Roman myths, too. Tell me more about that.

How do those connect to the story? Oh, absolutely. One of the most interesting parts, for sure. John, he wasn't writing in isolation.

He knew both Jewish and Greco-Roman culture, and he blended them together, creating a story that would really resonate with his audience. OK, so which myths? Give us the details. Well, there's Leto, a goddess pursued by the serpent Python.

To protect her kids, Apollo and Artemis, she runs away to the island of Delos to give birth. Does that sound familiar? Wow, yeah. Mother goddess running from a serpent, protecting her child.

It's just like the woman and the dragon in Revelation 12. Exactly. By connecting the woman to Leto, John's making her almost mythical, you know, showing how important she is in God's plan, how big these events are cosmically.

He's saying, like, this isn't just some random woman. This is a divine figure protecting the faithful, someone we should, like, revere. Yes, and there's more.

Remember the woman getting eagle's wings? Well, Zeus, in Greco-Roman myths, often became an eagle. And eagles symbolize divine power and protection. So John's using all these symbols from both Jewish and Greco-Roman traditions.

It's like a multilayered story using a bigger palette, you know, creating something richer, more meaningful. I like that. And there's another myth, Apollo slaying the Python.

People saw it as the victory of light over darkness, order over chaos. And how does that connect with Revelation 12? Well, Apollo defeated the serpent, right? Just like the sun in Revelation, he defeats the dragon, Satan. Evil might seem strong, but good wins in the end.

It's a message of hope that goes beyond any one culture. So these myths, they're not just random additions. They reinforce that message of hope and ultimate victory throughout Revelation.

It's amazing how he weaves these different things together- Jewish, Greco-Roman- making this rich tapestry. It is, and remember, this was all to encourage those early Christians. They were facing persecution and hardship.

Using those familiar stories and images, John communicated these profound truths in a way they'd understand, which would inspire them to hold on to their faith. Amazing how a text from 2,000 years ago can still speak to us today. That's the beauty of Revelation, I guess.

It challenges us, inspires us, gives us hope, no matter what we're going through. Yeah, I agree. As we keep exploring Revelation 12, let's remember this isn't just abstract stuff or ancient history.

It's a message that can change our lives, give us a deeper understanding of, well, the spiritual side of things, the things that shape our world. Absolutely, and on that note, I'm really curious where this goes next. We've got the woman, the dragon, the sun, all these connections to mythology, the Old Testament.

But Revelation 12, it doesn't stop there. What happens in this epic story? So last time, we were talking about the dragon, how he shifts his focus to the offspring of the woman, the ones who obey God's commandments, hold to the testimony of Jesus. Feels like a whole new level to this cosmic battle.

So what happens next? Yeah, it definitely ramps up. In chapter 13, things get, well, pretty intense. We're introduced to two beasts.

They're like Satan's agents, basically, going after the faithful. It's a part of Revelation that's always fascinated people and kind of freaks them out a little, too. Two beasts, OK, this sounds even wilder than a seven-headed dragon.

What are these beasts like? The first one comes out of the sea. And he's this, well, monstrous thing, like a mix of a leopard, bear, and a lion all in one. The dragon gives him a ton of power and authority.

And get this, he even gets a fatal wound that somehow heals. This beast is not someone to mess with. Yikes.

That's a pretty disturbing image. What do you think it means, combining all those animal features into one beast? It's definitely thought-provoking, right? Those animals were often used in the Old Testament to represent powerful empires, you know, the ones who oppressed God's people. Like the leopard, it was known for being fast and cunning.

The bear represented brute force. John, by putting all those together, he's creating this, like, ultimate image of tyranny. So it's like the worst of the worst, all in one terrifying package.

John's readers were facing persecution from Rome; it must have been pretty shocking for them. Oh, definitely. It would have hit home for them, living under an empire that could be so ruthless.

But then there's that miraculous part, the wound healing, that points to something, well, supernatural, right? Something beyond what humans can do. Yeah, and that brings up the question: what does that wound represent? It's one of the most debated parts of this whole thing. What are your thoughts? There are so many different interpretations.

It's definitely something to think about. Some scholars think it refers to something historical, like maybe an emperor being defeated and coming back to power. That healing would symbolize the empire rising up again, stronger, scarier.

It's like a mind game, almost. Making people afraid to resist. No matter how many times you knock the beast down, it comes back stronger.

That's it. And that fear, that intimidation, it's part of how this beast controls people. He demands worship, even blasphemes God.

He wants to turn people away from the true faith. Classic power move: submit to me or else. But then, like one beast wasn't enough, we get a second one.

This one comes from the earth. What's the story with this one? This second beast, he's not as monstrous-looking, but he might be even more dangerous in a way. He does all these miracles, even makes fire come down from heaven.

And he uses all that to trick people into worshiping the first beast. So he's like the ultimate con artist, a deceiver, using spectacle and manipulation to get what he wants. And it gets worse.

This second beast, he sets up this whole economic system. Everyone has to get a mark on their hand or forehead if they want to buy or sell anything. The mark of the beast.

It's pretty chilling. It means completely rejecting God, total loyalty to the beast. But what's the deeper meaning, do you think? What's it really about? The mark, it's not just a physical thing, you know? It's about where your loyalty lies: God or the beast.

It's about what you put your trust in, what you value most. So it's that choice. Faith, even when it's hard, or worldly power, even if you've got to compromise what you believe in.

That's it. And Revelation makes it clear that choice has eternal consequences. The people who take the mark, they're siding with darkness.

And they'll face God's judgment. That's a powerful message. Our choices matter in this life and the next.

But with all this darkness and persecution, is there any hope? What's the message for us, you know, trying to live through these times with all these spiritual battles going on? The hope in Revelation comes from the faithful. Even when things are really bad, they don't give up on God. They cling to the testimony of Jesus, even if it means death.

And their sacrifice, it's not for nothing. So it's a call to be brave, to stand strong in what we believe, no matter what. Yes, Revelation 12 and 13 remind us that this battle, good versus evil, is real.

It's all around us. But we're not alone. We've got God on our side.

And in the end, we win. That's something to hold on to, especially when things seem dark. But it makes me wonder: how do we know we're on the right side? How do we avoid being

tripped up by the beast, all those promises? That's the question, isn't it? Revelation tells us to look at ourselves, our hearts, what motivates us, where our loyalty lies.

Are we searching for truth, justice? Are we living with love, compassion? Or are we chasing power, greed, all that stuff the world offers? Those answers show us where we really stand. So we've got to live with intention. Pay attention to the choices we make every day.

Make sure our actions match what we believe. Well said. As we wrap up our deep dives into Revelation, let's remember this.

The battle is real. The stakes are high. But with God, we can overcome anything.

Thanks for joining us on this deep dive, folks. We'd love to hear your thoughts. What part of this message really resonated with you?