

Pastor Mark Mikels - June 14, 2020
DISCOVERING HOPE IN THE REVELATIONS OF
SCRIPTURE
"THE REVELATION OF THE WOMAN AND THE DRAGON "
(Revelation Chapter 12)

Intro ... Today we continue our quest for HOPE - life sustaining, mind invigorating, heart satisfying hope - in the Book of Revelation.

Last Sunday we participated (as it were) in what I called:
"The Ultimate Worship Service."

That's the incredible gathering depicted in Revelation chapter 11 when, at the end of all things, the Victorious Son of God, the Exalted Lord Jesus Himself, hands over 'The Kingdom' to His Heavenly Father so that *"God might be all in all."* It's the culmination of all things.

It's a Revelation that should encourage our hearts like no other for it depicts the ultimate resting place for our Hope ... In the Goodness and Greatness and the Wise and Loving Leadership of our Abba Father.

Someday, we say, some day it will happen and we who have confessed the Lord Jesus as Savior and who have called out to God for the forgiveness of sins and who have yielded ourselves to the Spirit sent to companion us through this life ...

***WE WILL BE THERE AND WILL BE
IN GOD'S PRESENCE FOREVER!***

Let us place our **HOPE** in such a destiny!

Now as I mentioned last week, the great angel who was speaking to John and revealing these awesome things could have easily thundered an '**AMEN**' at the end of last week's passage.

But he did not for there was more than John was chosen to see and to share ...

Things that would precede that Ultimate Moment - things that would make that Ultimate moment even more '**Ultimate**.'

And so, John writes on and pens chapters 12 and following.
And since the Worship Service we just observed was indeed the

ultimate expression and fulfillment of the Plans and Purposes of God, there should be a '*word of clarification*' at the beginning of chapter 12.

Like many TV shows or movies that begin by showing us some dramatic moment that takes place at the end of the story and then scroll across the screen the words ... "**Two years earlier**" to let us know that they are going to '*catch us up*' by taking us back to the beginning, so there should be at the beginning of Revelation chapter 12 a phrase something like:

"Thousands of Years Earlier ..."

And following such a disclaimer or word of clarification, John immediately shares with us ...

HOPE GENERATING REVELATION FOURTEEN ...

"THE WOMAN AND THE DRAGON"

Now allow me to give my own disclaimer and word of clarification. The Venerable Commentary on Revelation that I've mentioned before gives 42 small print pages to this chapter. Every nuance is discussed in great speculative detail. We are not going to do that this morning.

We are going to paint with a big brush and try to avoid as much speculation as possible and simply find the Hope-Generating Core Truth in this highly symbolic passage.

We will mainly stick just to the words of the Scripture and try to catch the awesome hope-generating truth within it just like we were one of John's first readers who didn't have access to 1000 page commentaries.

So, let's begin ...

The first part of this revelation focuses on a Woman in Heaven, a glorious woman indeed.

Here's how it reads ...

*** A GLORIOUS WOMAN (verses 1-2, 5-6)**

A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown with twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.

She gave birth to a son, a male child, who "will rule all the nations with an iron scepter." And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.

What a fascinating description - what elaborate language:

- She was clothed with the **SUN**.
- The **MOON** was under her feet.
- A **CROWN** with twelve stars on her head.
- She was pregnant and crying out in the pain of **LABOR**.
- She gave birth to a **SON** who is destined to **RULE**.
- Her son was **SNATCHED** up to God and to his throne.
- The woman fled to the **DESERT**.

Using the biggest possible brush of interpretation and making the broadest stroke possible, we can say that this woman depicts the People of God ... the people who have uniquely borne God's Name throughout earth's history:

The Patriarchs, the Hebrew Nation, the Church of Jesus Christ, the Tribulation Saints ... True believers of all ages constitute the called out '*People of God*.'

In God's eyes, they are truly glorious (they will indeed be '*clothed with the Son*') and they will share an inheritance as His Very Own and they all await the day when God the Father shall be recognized by all as '*Ruler over all*.'

But the woman is only part of the Revelation. John also sees in the heavens ...

* **A FEARSOME DRAGON** (verses 3-4)

Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads. Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that it might devour her child the moment he was born.

- Seven **HEADS** and ten **HORNS** wearing seven **CROWNS**
- **SWEPT** one third of the stars from the sky; **FLUNG** them to earth.
- **SOUGHT** (unsuccessfully) to **DEVOUR** the woman's child at birth.

The one this dragon represents has been countering the woman - challenging and seeking to destroy the People of God - since way back into the distant past. In chapter twelve, we will be told straight out that this dragon is Lucifer, or Satan or Devil.

This dragon is still at work today seeking to devour the People of God and to demonstrate his control over all the earth's peoples.

My friends, do not be deceived and do not ignore what is going on. The Devil's tail is wrapped around the events of these present days. And he is no more gentle with those he controls today than he was with the angels he deceived and then 'flung' out of heaven.

His is the will that is being worked out as institutions of our world and of our country are possibly being changed forever. His is the mouth that thunders out lies and forms mobs of violence; His is the strategy that seeks to put more and more of the world under the authority of fewer and fewer. Bringing men to power and promising them untold wealth has been a key strategy of his since the very beginning of time. Do not be deceived.

Those who rail against earthly authority and who seek to build kingdoms by which they can ensnare men are walking to the beat of His Drum but they will not find themselves participating in any victory parade. Their doom is sure and their master is ruthless.

And now John sees not another "**Sign**" but rather a "**Scene**" in Heaven - an incredible scene ... It's a story for the ages and it generates much of the "**Hope**" found in this passage.

* **THE WAR IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS** (verses 7-9)

Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven.

The great dragon was hurled down—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.

- Michael and his angels **OVERCAME** the Dragon and his angels
- The Dragon (Satan) and his angels were **CAST** down to earth.
- Satan '*leads the whole earth **ASTRAY**' (vs. 9)
(*"The Devil led me to do it"* is true!)*

Since this is '*The Story of the Ages*' I would believe that John is viewing a replay of a struggle that took place at the very beginning of earth's history. I do not believe that Satan's Rebellion was tolerated in Heaven for even a moment. His Arrogant Rebellion and the others who joined in it were given no opportunity to feel victorious or vindicated. There would be no Co-Regency in Heaven ...

God could have just thrown them out Himself, like He will eventually throw them all into the Lake of Fire.

But God gave that privilege to Michael and the other faithful members of the heavenly hosts.

The Dragon who thought he could challenge God Himself could not even overcome those of his own kind ...
What a blow to His Pride that must have been!

NOW THE STORY GOES ON AS JOHN DESCRIBES ...

* ***THE CONDITIONS ON THE EARTH*** (verses 13-17)
When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might

fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach.

Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent.

But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.

Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God's commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus.

- He **PURSUES** the woman, but she has been **PROTECTED**.

- He wages **WAR** with her offspring who '**OBEY** God's *Commandments and hold to the **TESTIMONY** of Jesus'*
(The 144,000 witnesses and their converts)

Because of the specific time frame given (a time, times and half a time), I believe that we can place these events during the tribulation time when the 144,000 are boldly testifying and untold numbers of the earth's people are finding salvation in Jesus Christ ... who have (as it says in chapter seven) ...

'washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.'

And so, we see the old Dragon not only defeated in heaven but frustrated on earth.

And now this Revelation concludes with ...

*** A GREAT HOPE-GENERATING ANNOUNCEMENT ...** (verses 10-12a)

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Messiah.

For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

They triumphed over him 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. Therefore, rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them!

Believers can overcome **SATAN** by the **BLOOD** of the **LAMB**
and by the **WORD** of their **TESTIMONY** and the
FAITHFULNESS of their **LIVES!**
(verses 10-11)

Here's how it's expressed in the Epistle written by James the Lord's brother:

"SUBMIT yourself to God, **RESIST** the Devil
and he will **FLEE** from you."
(James 4:7)

We need to regularly remind ourselves what awesome beings we are aligned with and what powerful spiritual weapons we hold in our hands and hearts ...

The Blood of the Lamb (it has done its job)
The Word of our Testimony (The Spirit establishes it in our hearts)
The Faithfulness of our Lives ("Keep in step with the Spirit" -Gal 5:25)

Do not give credit where credit is not due - the Devil is a defeated foe. Remind yourself frequently of the truth of Today's ...

Final Thot ...

The so-called **STRUGGLE** between **GOOD** and **EVIL**
has never been a **FAIR FIGHT**. The **OUTCOME**
has never been in **DOUBT!**