

The Grace of Wrath

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Text

12:1-6

Topic

John sees a sign illustrating God
restraining Satan from preventing the birth of Jesus

Title

“How to Restrain Your Dragon”

The most recognizable brand logo in the United States is what?

Two thousand Americans who were asked chose the Apple icon.

Company logos are expensive and valuable:

- Symantec paid \$1.2m for a stylized checkmark in a circle. Symantec is the company that brought us Norton Anti-Virus.
- The Nike Swoosh is worth \$67b. The logo, not the company.

The genuinely great logos are symbols without words. Besides the Apple and the Swoosh, the Golden Arches and the Two-tailed Mermaid round out the top four.

Our text in the Revelation presents a spectacular sign.

Rev 12:1 Now a great sign appeared in Heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.

Rev 12:2 Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.
Rev 12:3 And another sign appeared in Heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.
Rev 12:4 His tail drew a third of the stars of Heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

Anyone familiar with the Book of Genesis knows immediately what this image illustrates.

If you don't see it, that's OK. You will see it a few minutes into our study.

The spectacular sign is the 'logo' for Satan's constant interference with God's plan of salvation throughout human history.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Jesus Came Through Israel As Your Savior Despite Satan's Continual Interference**, and **#2 Jesus Comes To Israel As Your Sovereign Despite Satan's Continuing Interference**.

#1 - Jesus Came Through Israel As Your Savior Despite Satan's Continual Interference (v1-5)

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve defied God's one undemanding request. Choosing self and Satan over God, they plunged *creatures* and *creation* into ruin.

Our merciful God, without hesitation, disclosed His plan to redeem creatures and restore creation. He said to Satan, "I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise [literally, crush] your head, And you shall bruise His heel" (Genesis 3:15).

Scholars call this statement the *protoevangelium*. It means the first Good News. The Bible Knowledge Commentary describes it this way:

God said there would be a perpetual struggle between satanic forces and mankind. It would be between Satan and the woman and their respective offspring or “seeds.” The “offspring” of the woman was Cain, then all humanity at large, and then Jesus Christ and those collectively in Him. The “offspring” of the serpent includes demons and anyone serving his kingdom of darkness, those whose “father” is the Devil (John 8:44). Satan would cripple mankind (“you shall bruise his heel”), but *the Seed*, Jesus Christ, would deliver the fatal blow (“He will [crush] your head”).

- Another commentary said, “As the acorn contains the mighty oak, so these words contain the entire plan of salvation.”
- English preacher Charles Simeon went even further calling this verse, “The sum and summary of the whole Bible.”

The “great sign” conveys the *protoevangelium* and its effect on the history of the world.

Rev 12:1 Now a great sign appeared in Heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.

The purpose of using a “sign” is to *clarify*, not *confuse*. The signs in the Revelation *reveal*, not *conceal*.

The signs are defined for us either in the book itself or elsewhere in the Bible. We will see an example of that in verse nine.

Our attention is drawn to the woman with the dragon antagonist.

If you have ever read the story of Joseph in the Book of Genesis, you have met this woman.

Joseph said, “Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me. So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, “What is this dream

that you have dreamed? Shall **your mother and I and your brothers** indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?" (37:9-10).

- The "sun and the moon" are Joseph's parents, Jacob and Rachel.
- The "eleven stars" are his eleven brothers, the patriarchs of eleven tribes of Israel.
- Joseph is the twelfth star.

No other passage in the Bible contains this precise imagery.

The woman clothed with the sun, the moon, and the twelve stars is national Israel.

Rev 12:2 Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.

The "Seed" God spoke about in the Garden of Eden is the "Child" born to national Israel in verse two.

As the Bible narrative progresses through history, God continually narrows down the lineage of the promised Seed.

He would be born through Noah's son Shem, by a descendant of Abraham, coming from the Tribe of Judah, and be in the line of King David. The Messiah can only be Jesus.

The "woman" is not a reference to Mary. Yes, she gave birth to Jesus. Notwithstanding that, if you drop down to verse seventeen, you read, "the rest of [the woman's] offspring" flee from Satan during the Great Tribulation. This woman illustrates national Israel, *not* a particular Jewish mom like Mary.

Her "labor and pain" in childbirth is an understatement of the continuous persecution against Jews throughout history.

Enter the dragon:

Rev 12:3 And another sign appeared in Heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.

No need to guess at the identity of the dragon. In verse nine we read, "The great dragon... that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan."

In chapter twenty we will read, "The dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan" (20:2).

- He is "great" because he has authority over hoards of malevolent supernatural beings and has been granted limited rule over Earth.
- He is "fiery." The word is *pyro*. Fire-breathing dragons most certainly existed at one time. Satan is similar to them in terms of the destructive lies he spews out of his mouth.
- "Red" denotes Satan's bloodlust. He was a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44), and he continues to kill.

Don't look to The Rolling Stones for theology, but when Mick Jagger sings *Symphony for the Devil*, he recognizes the truth that Satan has been at work behind history to rob, kill, and destroy.

The "heads," "horns," and "diadems" will be explained fully in chapter seventeen. Here is a preview:

- The "seven heads" with "seven diadems" are seven successive kingdoms in biblical history that persecute Israel. (1)Egypt, (2)Assyria, (3)Babylon, (4)Persia, (5)Greece, (6)Rome, and (7)a future kingdom with ties to the Roman Empire that will exist during the Great Tribulation.
- The "ten horns" elaborate on the seventh future kingdom. The prophet Daniel wrote, "The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this [final] kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, And shall subdue three kings" (7:24).
- The one who rises from this future kingdom and subdues three kings is the antichrist.

History's logo contains this series of world kingdoms that persecuted and will persecute national Israel.

Company logos often contain additional information as you look closely:

- Look closely at the FedEx logo and you will see in the space between the E and the X an arrow pointing forward, suggesting speedy delivery.
- In the Tostitos logo, the dot over the "i" is a bowl of salsa. The two "t's" are people, and the yellow triangle in between them is a chip. It's represents people coming together to share a tasty snack.

The great sign of the Revelation is complex but simple to understand.

Rev 12:4 His tail drew a third of the stars of Heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

"Stars" is a designation used in the Bible for angels. In the Book of Job, we read of a time "When the morning **stars** sang together, and all the **sons of God** shouted for joy" (38:7). It is parallelism in which "stars" and "sons of God" mean the same thing.

Satan drawing "a third of the stars of Heaven" is where we get the idea that a third of the created angels joined him in his rebellion against God.

I am aware that it is popular today to claim that this verse is not enough to prove that a third of the angels fell with the Devil. It is enough. In verse nine, we will read that Satan "was cast to the earth, **and his angels were cast out with him.**"

There are many biblical examples of the dragon seeking to devour the child:

- Cain's murder of Abel (Genesis 4:8). First John 3:12 says, "Cain... was of that wicked one, and slew his brother." When Cain killed Abel, Satan was attempting to exterminate the line through which the Savior would be born.

- The marriages of fallen angels with human females leading to the birth of Nephilim giants (Genesis 6:1-4) was a strategy to interfere with the birth of the child. These unions were corrupting human DNA to destroy humanity. It came close to success in that only eight souls entered the Ark.
- Pharaoh's order to murder the male children in Egypt (Exodus 1:15-22).
- The attempted murders of David by King Saul and others (e.g., First Samuel 18:10-11).
- Queen Athaliah's attempt to destroy the royal seed (Second Chronicles 22:10).
- Haman's attempt to slaughter the Jews recorded in the Book of Esther.
- King Herod's order to murder the male children of Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16).

Anti-semitism is prevalent in history after the completion of the Bible:

- The Crusader army swept through Jewish communities looting, raping, and massacring Jews as they went. Thus was born what historians call the *pogrom* - the organized massacre of a targeted group of people.
- In the middle of the fourteenth century, Jews were accused of spreading the bubonic plague. In Germany and Austria, it is estimated that 100,000 Jews were burned alive.
- Martin Luther wrote a pamphlet in 1545 entitled *The Jews and Their Lies*, claiming that Jews thirsted for Christian blood and urging the killing of Jews. The Nazis reprinted it in 1935.

Whether it's the Holocaust or Hamas, anti-Semitism is a theme running through human history.

The decisive satanic interference was the murder of Jesus on the Cross. Or was it?

**Little did Satan understand that the Cross was the instrument that would
"crush [Satan's] head."**

Rev 12:5 She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

The “rod of iron” belongs to the promised Messiah. Psalm 2:9 says of Him, “You shall break them [the rebellious nations] with a rod of iron.”

Jesus is the “male Child,” the promised Seed of the woman. The heavenly sign contains His life and ministry, His death and resurrection, when it shows Him “caught up to God and His throne.”

It’s a logo with motion. Remember those dot-drawings that you stare at until an image comes into focus? Or maybe the living pictures in The Daily Prophet newspaper in Harry Potter.

Of late, there has been an attempt to include the church in this catching up. It’s true that the word used for “caught up” is *harpazō*, from which we get rapture. That observation is not significant:

- The Bible uses *harpazō* to describe the snatching away of Philip after dealing with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:39).
- The Bible uses *harpazō* to describe the catching up of the apostle Paul to Heaven (Second Corinthians 12:2&4).

The great sign is about national Israel.

I’ve told you the story of my Tae Kwon Do days.

A Korean champion, Master Pak bu Kwon, visited our dojo. I had the privilege to spar with him. I couldn’t touch him. What was worse, he would tell me what he was about to do on offense, but there was nothing I could do to block him.

Satan knows what God is doing. He can’t win on offense or defense. His days are numbered.

#2 - Jesus Comes To Israel As Your Sovereign Despite Satan's Continuing Interference (v6)

FailArmy is a guilty pleasure. It is a YouTube channel that purports to be the world's #1 source for epic fail videos. For instance, the guy who tried to back out a riding lawnmower from his pick-up. The wheels go off the ramps causing the mower to fall and tip over on him.

Satan is the undisputed leader of the most epic FailArmy of all time.

Despite his strength and strategies, in the four thousand or so years from Adam until the first coming of our Lord, he and his army had one job. They failed to accomplish their primary objective.

Rev 12:6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

Review is more necessary in the Revelation than in any other book of the Bible. I'll be brief.

- Jesus took a scroll from His Father and began to open its seven seals one at a time.
- Opening the first five seals revealed things to happen on Earth during the first one thousand two hundred and sixty days of the Great Tribulation.
- The sixth seal was a preview of things to come with opening the seventh seal.
- The opening of the seventh seal revealed seven angels with seven trumpets.
- The blowing of the first six trumpets revealed things to happen on Earth during the final one thousand two hundred and sixty days of the Great Tribulation.
- The blowing of the seventh trumpet prompted the phenomenal prophetic proclamation, "The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

- Before Jesus returns in His Second Coming to “reign forever and ever,” seven additional angels will pour out upon the inhabitants of Earth seven bowls of the wrath of God.
- When the angel pours out bowl number seven we read “It is done” (16:17).

One more thing to bear in mind. The Great Tribulation lasts precisely seven years. It is divided into two halves that are variously described as:

- Three-and-one-half years.
- A time times and half a time.
- One thousand two hundred and sixty days.

It is divided in half by the antichrist defiling the rebuilt Jewish Temple when he demands to be worshipped in an event called “The Abomination of Desolation.”

The action in verse six occurs during the second half of the Great Tribulation. In what we call “The Little Apocalypse” for its brevity while covering this same material, Jesus said:

Mat 24:15 "Therefore when you see the 'ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),

Mat 24:16 "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Mat 24:17 Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.

Mat 24:18 And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

Mat 24:19 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

Mat 24:20 And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.

Mat 24:21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.

There seems to be a specific “place prepared by God” where Jews will be kept safe. The popular guess is modern-day Petra, the famous rock city of Edom.

Petra is located sixty to one hundred miles to the south of Jerusalem in a mountain chain. The site remained unknown to the Western world until Swiss explorer Johann Ludwig Burckhardt discovered it in 1812.

There is a story that evangelist W.E. Blackstone spent \$8000 in the 1920s to have copies of the New Testament and Gospel tracts placed at Petra so that Jews who flee there will recognize Jesus as their Savior at the final hour.

Someone *will* stock Petra, or a location like it that is within the geography Jesus mentioned.

I used to think that the 'S' on his chest stood for Superman. In recent years we've been told it is the Kryptonian symbol for Hope.

The great sign, history's logo, is Hope on steroids. God will bring His plan to its glorious completion.

Meanwhile, humans suffer. It is a problem we often discuss since it touches each of us, and it is the primary reason nonbelievers offer for rejecting God.

What about God's suffering?

In the Garden of Eden, while the wound of their willful disobedience was fresh, God promised to come and save us. His plan, really the only possible plan, the *protoevangelium*, would cause Him suffering on a scale we cannot begin to gauge.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem because they rejected Him as their Messiah, thereby refusing His offer of the kingdom. Instead of enjoying blessing, they would be overrun by Rome, have their city and Temple destroyed, and be dispersed without a home in hostile nations all over the Earth.

If that tragedy evoked tears, how much more does the total suffering of every person ever conceived for whom God desires salvation?

God determined to save us by the only means possible. He would become a man through the virgin birth. He would be fully God and fully man, the unique God-man, to substitute Himself for us in a psychologically and physically vicious Crucifixion, abandoned by all but one of His apostles, after having been betrayed by one of them and denied by another.

Jesus knows suffering, AND He knows *your* pain and suffering.

Love hurts. Nevertheless, while we were yet sinners, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to save us.

*He gave His life, O what more could He give
O how He loves you O how He loves me
O how He loves you and me*