

A Woman, a Dragon, & a Beast from the Sea

Thomas Robinson, *Apocalypse Today* 6, July 8, 2018

Revelation 12:1 - 15:4

(1) A Woman wearing the Sun bears a Son. A Red Dragon Attacks.

12:¹ And a great sign appeared in the heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.² Because she is pregnant, she cries out with labor pains and suffering greatly to give birth.

³ And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a giant serpent-dragon (*drakon*), fiery red, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems.⁴ His tail drags down a third of the stars of heaven and casts them to the earth. And the serpent-dragon is lying opposite the woman who is about to give birth, so that when she bears her child he may devour it.

⁵ She gave birth to a son, a male child [Ex 1:16], who is going to shepherd all the nations with an iron staff [Rv 2:27; Ps 2:9]. And her child was snatched away to God and to his throne.⁶ And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared from God, in order that they may nourish her for 1,260 days (3 ½ yrs, Rv 11:3).

War in Heaven. Michael casts the Dragon out of Heaven to Earth.

⁷ Now a war broke out in the heaven; Michael and his angels making war against the serpent-dragon. The serpent-dragon and his angels fought back,⁸ but he didn't prevail, nor was any place found for them any longer in the heaven.⁹ And the giant serpent-dragon was thrown down, the ancient snake, who is called Accuser (*diabolos*) and the Satan, the one who deceives the whole inhabited world – he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Meaning: Satan is out of Heaven but is now on Earth, raging because of defeat.

¹⁰ And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying,

*"Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God
and the authority of his Messiah have come,
because the accuser of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down,
who accuses them before our God by day and night.*

¹¹ *And they were victorious over him because of the blood of the Lamb [Isa 53:7]
and because of the message (logos) of their testimony,
and they did not love their own lives (psyché) to the point of death.*

¹² *Therefore, rejoice, you heavens and those who set their tent in the heavens!
Woe to the earth and the sea,
for the Accuser (diabolos) has come down to you with great passion,
since he knows that his time is short!"*

Earth sustains the Woman (God's People), but Satan attacks them.

¹³ And when the serpent-dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who gave birth to the male child.¹⁴ But to the woman were given the two wings of the giant eagle so that she might fly into the wilderness [Ex 19:4], to her place where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time [Dan 7:25, = 3 ½ yrs?], away from the presence of the snake.

¹⁵ The snake spewed water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to make her something swept away.¹⁶ But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed the river that the serpent-dragon spewed from his mouth.

¹⁷ Then the serpent-dragon raged with wrath against the woman and went off to make war with the rest of her offspring – on those who keep the commandments of God and hold firmly the testimony of Jesus. And he lay on the sand of the sea.

(2) A Beast from the chaotic Sea counterfeits the Lamb and serves the Dragon.

13:¹ And I saw a wild beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and on its heads names of blasphemy. ² And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the serpent-dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. [Dan 7:1-7, lion, bear, leopard, beast = empires]

³ One of its heads seemed to have been slain unto death, but its deathly wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled after the beast. ⁴ And they worshiped the serpent-dragon, because he gave the authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to make war against it?" ⁵ And the beast was given a mouth speaking huge things and blasphemies, and it was given authority to act for forty-two months (3 ½ yrs). ⁶ It opened its mouth for blasphemies toward God, to blaspheme his name and his tent/tabernacle, that is, those who set their tent in the heaven.

⁷ Also it was granted for it to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given to it over every tribe and people and language and nation, ⁸ and all who are settled down upon the earth will worship him, all whose name has not been written in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world. [1Pt 1:19; Rv 17:8]

⁹ If anyone has an ear, let him hear: [Rv 2:7; Mt 13:9] ¹⁰ If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be killed by the sword, with the sword is he killed. At this point is the endurance and faithfulness that belongs to the saints.

(3) A second Beast speaks for the Dragon, deceiving those settled on Earth.

¹¹ Then I saw another wild beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it was speaking like a serpent-dragon. ¹² It exercises all the authority of the first wild beast in its presence, and makes the earth and those who are settled down in it worship the first wild beast, whose deathly wound was healed. ¹³ It does huge signs, so as to make fire descend from heaven to earth in the presence of people, ¹⁴ and it deceives those who are settled down upon the earth because of the signs that are given to it to do in the presence of the wild beast, telling those who are settled down upon the earth to make an image for the wild beast who has the wound of the sword and lived.

¹⁵ And it was allowed to give spirit/breath to the image of the wild beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause all who do not worship the image of the wild beast to be killed. ¹⁶ Also it makes everyone, the small and the great, the rich and the poor, the free and slaves, that they stamp a mark on them, either on their right hand or their forehead, ¹⁷ so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the wild beast or the number of its name. ¹⁸ This the time to be wise: let the one who has a mind calculate the number of the wild beast, for it is a number of a person, and his number is six hundred sixty-six.

(4) The Lamb with the Throng bearing God's Name singing a New Song.

14:¹ Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 with his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads. ² And I heard a voice from the heaven like a voice of many waters and like a voice of great thunder, and the voice that I heard was as the voice of lyre players playing on their lyres.

³ And they sing a new song (Rv 5:9) before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. ⁴ It is these who have not become ritually impure with women, for they are virgins [2Cor 11:2; 1Sm 21:5]. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from all humans as firstfruit of harvest for God and the Lamb, ⁵ and in their mouth no lie was found [Isa 53:9]; they are blameless.

(5) Good News for all of Earth's deceived, and Judgment on Human Empire.

⁶ Then I saw another angel flying at the zenith of heaven, with an announcement of good news (gospel) of the age to come to announce over those sitting on the earth and over every nation and tribe and language and people. ⁷ He said with a loud voice,

*"Fear God and give glory to him,
because the hour of his judgment has come,
and worship him who made the heaven
and the earth and sea and springs of water."*

⁸ Another angel, a second, followed, saying,

*"It fell, it fell, Babylon the great! [Isa 21:9; Jer 50:2]
She who has given all nations to drink
from the wine of the passion of her immorality." [Isa 51:17-23; Dt 32:32-33]*

⁹ And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the wild beast and his image and receives a mark on their forehead or on their hand, ¹⁰ they also will themselves drink the wine of God's passion, mixed undiluted in the cup of his wrath, and they will be harassed with fire and sulfur opposite holy angels and opposite the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke from their harassment goes up into ages of ages. And they have no rest, by day and by night, those who worship the wild beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of its name." ¹² At this point is the endurance that belongs to the saints, who keep God's precepts and the faithfulness of Jesus.

¹³ And I heard a voice from the heaven saying, "Write:

*Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on."
"Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors,
for their works are following with them!" [1Cor 15:58]*

(6) Joyful Harvest of God's Creation – Bread & Wine – Brings flow of blood.

¹⁴ Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. [Dan 7:13, Mk 4:29] ¹⁵ And another angel came out of the sanctuary, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle, and harvest, for the hour to reap has come, for the wheat harvest of the earth is yellow." [Joel 3:13; Jn 4:35-38] ¹⁶ So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle upon the earth, and the earth was harvested.

¹⁷ Then another angel came out of the sanctuary in the heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle.

¹⁸ And another angel came from the altar, the one with authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle and gather in the grape clusters of the vineyard of the earth, for its grapes are ripe." ¹⁹ So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered in the vineyard of the earth and cast it into the great winepress of the passion (*thymos*) of God. ²⁰ And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood flowed out of the winepress, as high as horses' bridles, for 1,600 stadia (200 mi.). [Rev 19:11-16; Gn 49:11; Dt 32:14; Isa 63:2-6; Joel 3:13; Mk 14:36; Heb 13:11-14]

(7) All who are victorious over the Beast sing the Songs of Moses and the Lamb.

15:¹ Then I saw another sign in the heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues/wounds, the last, for with them was completed the passion of God.² And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire – and also those winning victory from the wild beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass holding lyres of God.

³ And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

“Great and amazing are your deeds, Lord God the Almighty!

Righteous and true are your ways, the King of the nations!

⁴ *Who will not surely fear, Lord, and glorify your name?*

Because you alone are holy.

Because all nations will come and worship before you,

Because your righteous deeds were made manifest.”

Woman Bringing Life, Dragon Inflicting Death – Two Kinds of Struggle

John has led us through a Vision of Jesus; Letters to 7 strong/weak, struggling, persecuted churches; Vision of door opening on God’s throne, creatures, elders, scroll, hero/slain lamb; Seals: human evils, earth’s response, cowering power, great multitude; Trumpets: failure of avenging, path of faithful witness, death, resurrection like Jesus, triumph of God’s kingdom.

Now the most vivid vision runs through second half of Rev. Conflict between God, creator of physical world and life, and all forces of death, deception, “*destroyers of the earth*” (11:18).

Problem: We know only wars of armies, death against death: Patton. How do you describe a conflict in which one side is familiar: passion for conquest, propaganda, violence, death. The other side’s weapons are passion for creating life, grace, self-giving love, witness to truth. Bloodshed is the Lamb giving his life. Yes, death ends up destroyed, but by life, by being removed. A battle so strange that it’s hard to express it in normal words. Reversed.

Woman (God’s ideal people) giving birth/life. Serpent-dragon ready to inflict death. Son: male of Exod., Lamb, Jesus’ death, res., But this is the story of God’s people in the wilderness, nourished and threatened. War in Heaven: Accuser/Satan thrown down by Michael. This is victory by the blood of the lamb and message and taking up cross. Setting tent in Heaven. Dragon defeated, raging on earth–river, earth–pursues all who hold the testimony of Jesus.

Beast 1 and Beast 2 – Counterfeit Power and the Big Lie

Beast from the sea echoes Daniel’s vision of empires. They come and go but all are destructive beasts: the Dragon’s work, defeated but powerful over all of us who settle for earth. Power, mammon, control, pleasure, violence: global, national, professional, race, job, family, etc.

Second beast, puts on the velvet glove. Lamb-Dragon. Big Lie. Emperor cult. Fake life. The power & ways of this world are the only option. Take your place/mark, get along. Parody of God’s identity, Spirit. Roman empire, any human empire is passing. 666 – brokenness.

God’s Grace so New that We don’t have Words for it.

John sees God’s people now as perfect, purified throng, with Jesus/Lamb’s name with God as identity and New Song of Lamb. Firstfruit of harvest. Then angels with good news: The creator is setting things right: Babylon (destructive empire) fell, corrupter of the nations.

Joyful harvest of wheat and grapes. But it comes by the passionate suffering of Jesus and his people (winepress outside city). He takes on death to conquer it and give spreading life. No ‘Grapes of wrath’ but blood of life that we share. Great, amazing, holy, glorious, righteous