

# The Book of Revelation



# Revelation's Recapitulation Pattern

*“It is important at this point that the reader understand the overall structure of the book of Revelation. It is written in a recapitulation pattern...In order to understand the Revelation, one should read it without linking each chapter in a chronological order. Instead, it should be read with the understanding that the pageantry recapitulates earlier visions, thereby deepening one’s insight...the remaining visions will show that behind the scenes the struggle actually originates in heaven. The battle is between God and Satan, righteousness versus evil.”*

(Harkrider, “Revelation,” *Truth Commentaries*, 131-132)

# The Struggle of Christians from a Cosmic Perspective

- Broadly speaking, the 1<sup>st</sup> half of Revelation is about the judgments of God against the enemy. The second half of the book is about the evil nature of the enemy.
- Chapter 12 is setting the persecutions of Christians in Asia Minor in cosmic perspective. This interlude between the trumpets and the bowls serves to introduce the characters and the underlying reasons for the conflict.
- Combat tales involving dragons/serpents were common in the ancient world. *“Striking parallels have been found in Babylonian, Persian, Egyptian, and Greek mythology, and in astrological lore.”* (Metzger, 72)
- Revelation 12 is intended to mock pagan myths AND reveal the spiritual realities occurring behind the scenes (cf. 2Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:12).



# War Against the Serpent

- Biblical Background

- *“And I will put enmity between you [the Serpent] and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.” (Genesis 3:15)*
- *“Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; When he was but one I called him, then I blessed him and multiplied him.”  
Indeed, the Lord will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places. And her wilderness he will make like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in her, Thanksgiving and sound of a melody. ... Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake as in the days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon? Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; who made the depths of the sea a pathway for the redeemed to cross over? So the ransomed of the Lord will return and come with joyful shouting to Zion, and everlasting joy will be on their heads. They will obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.” (Isa. 51:2-3, 9-11)*

# War Against the Serpent

- Biblical Background

- *“Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she gave birth to a boy. ... As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons. ... For thus says the Lord, “Behold, I extend peace to her like a river, ... and you will be nursed, you will be carried on the hip and fondled on the knees. As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you will be comforted in Jerusalem.” (Isa. 66:7-13)*
- *“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.” (John 3:15-16)*
- The Serpent is clearly Satan, the deceptive and mighty prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2)

# War Against the Serpent

- Greco-Roman Background – The Apollo Myth
  - According to this myth, Leto was pregnant with Apollo by Zeus. Out of jealousy, Hera sent Pytho, the serpent to attack Leto. Leto's child was destined to kill the serpent. Zeus sent winds and carried Leto to the island of Delos and Poseidon hid the island under the water. Apollo slew the serpent (python) at Delphi and Delphi becomes the home of Apollo's oracle.



# War Against the Serpent

- Greco-Roman Background – The Apollo Myth
  - Apollo was god of prophecy, often associated with a lyre
  - Apollo was associated with the sun (“Phoebus”)
  - Roman emperors often depicted themselves as or alongside Apollo

*Augustus with Apollo on a Griffin at Prima Porta*



*Nero as Apollo at Moregine, S of Pompeii*



*Nero Laureate Head; Apollo with Lyre Obverse*



# War Against the Serpent





# “Once, Twice, Three Times A Loser”

- This diabolical dragon, who is powerful (10 horns, cf. 17:3, 7, 12; Eph. 6:12; Col. 1:13; Jude 6), wears 7 diadems of kingly power (John 12:31; 2Cor. 4:4; Eph. 4:14), and is equipped to persecute the saints (Dan. 8, 10), loses 3x against:
  - A Pregnant Woman
  - A Baby
  - An Angelic Messenger
- God does not even have to “show up” to the fight
- Satan never wears a “*stephanos*”



## Loses Against the Pregnant Woman (12:1-6)

- The woman is described with a heavenly, glorious, and pure appearance (cf. Joseph in Gen. 37:9-11), wearing a victory crown (Gk: *stephanos*)
- She clearly represents the people of God – the 12 stars are the giveaway here (12 tribes; 12 apostles) as is the connection to the celestial bodies – lights in a dark world (cf. 2Cor. 4:3-4); perhaps specifically the faithful remnant of God (Heb. 9:15; 11:40)
- Background in Is. 51:2-3, 9-11; 66:7-13; Mic. 4:10; Jer. 51:34; Egypt was like a dragon to God's people (e.g., Ps. 74:13; Isa. 51:9; Ezek. 29:3)
- Satan wears diadems, but even a defeated king may wear his crown! Only a victor can wear a victor's crown!

# Loses Against the Baby (12:1-6)

- The baby represents Jesus – *“The dragon’s eagerness to devour the child explains the violent opposition that Jesus met during his earthly ministry. It began with the slaughter of the children in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:16) and culminated when he was crucified outside the city of Jerusalem.”* (Metzger, 73)
- Verse 5 echoes Psalm 2:7-9
- Ascent to God = Victory; cf. the two witnesses; The enthronement of Jesus means the redemption and victory of His people. Victory does not come without a struggle, and some of the faithful die in loyalty to God.
- Jesus has all authority, in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-23; Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14; 1Pet. 3:21f; Rev. 19:15-16). He is “King of kings and Lord of lords”
- Even in coming to the world as a baby, God could not be defeated in His purposes (cf. Gen. 12:3; 22:18) – *“What was intended by the devil to be a means of extermination became God’s means of salvation.”* (Harkrider, 137)
- Jesus’ victory is furthered by the church (Rom. 16:20)

# Loses Against the Angel (12:7-12)

- There was & is a war in the spirit realm; Satan is an accuser and an adversary (cf. Job 1:6ff; 2:1ff; Zech. 3:1f)
- This spiritual conflict is what produces persecution on the earth (see verse 9). Consider the power of the serpent as he, with the flick of his tail, casts 1/3 of the stars (people, angels, power?) to earth. Antiochus Epiphanes, an evil ruler, is described as having this power (Dan. 8:10).
- Michael, an archangel, is the defender of God's people (cf. Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9) – If Satan can't beat the messenger boy of Jesus...
- Satan is defeated. Satan couldn't stop Jesus' birth; he couldn't defeat Jesus during his fleshly sojourn; and he certainly can't mount any type of successful assault against His heavenly rule. This is pictured as a battle fought and won against Satan by Michael and an angelic host.
- His being cast out onto the earth is akin to the spiritual victories illustrated in Luke 10:18; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11. *"This vision depicts the climax between the forces of righteousness and evil, as demonstrated in the heavenly battle that took place at the death of Christ."* (Harkrider, 140)
- God's people overcome by the Lamb's blood, the word of their testimony, and their total commitment (verse 11; cf. Heb. 3:14; 10:23; 1Pet. 1:5)

# Loses Against the Angel (12:7-12)

*“It should be noted that this is not a picture of the battle which the Savior fought against Satan. Christ is robbed of his deity by those who convert him into the created angel Michael and assume that this is a reference to the Son of God. The writer of Hebrews defends the deity of Christ in a manner that affirms he was never in the form of an angel (Heb. 1:5-8). Michael was the leader of the army of holy angels whom God used to defeat the army of Satan in his heavenly attempt to destroy Christ. The effect of this battle is that the purpose and plan of Christ are fully accomplished (Eph. 3:10-11).”*

*“Until this time Satan and his angels had power in heaven to accuse men before God, but now he can no longer hold men in death’s bondage (Heb. 2:14-15). Men can now be justified before God through the blood of Christ. G.B. Caird suggests that in legal terms Satan had been disbarred; his place before God as the prosecuting counsel against the righteous can no longer exist because his charges against God’s people have been proven false.” (Harkrider, 139)*

# Satan's Attacks Versus God's Protections (12:13-17)

- The “great eagle” (verse 14) – God is often depicted as a great eagle, protecting His people (e.g., Ex. 19:4; Deut. 32:11-12; Isa. 40:31; Ps. 46:1-3)
- The woman later flees to the wilderness (cf. Moses, Israel, Elijah, David, Jesus), a place of protection and also testing, for a substantial, but curtailed time (1260 days; cf. 3.5 days, 3.5 years, 42 months)
- Her flight to the wilderness is in contrast to those who dwell in “the great city” (11:8; cf. Jn. 17:11, 16)



# Satan's Attacks Versus God's Protections (12:13-17)

- Satan pours forth a flood of evil, falsehood, lies (John 8:44). Though powerful (cf. Eph. 6:10; 1Pet. 5:8; 2Pet. 2:4; Jude 6), Satan cannot defeat God outright, so he tries to defeat the people of God on earth. God will see that the faithful endure.
  - “Flood” = tribulation from the ungodly (Isa. 8:5-8; Ps. 18:4)
  - “Mouth” = teaching, especially heresy (cf. 2:14-15, 20)
  - Compare the deception of Eve (2Cor. 11:4, 12-15)
  - *“the devil’s harassment of the church is not because he is triumphant, but because he is desperate.”* (Harkrider, 133)
  - Received by the earth, i.e., unbelievers; believers successfully resist (James 4:7; 1Pet. 5:8-9; cf. Isa. 42:15; 43:2; Ps. 144:7)
- *“As long as the world absorbs the river of Satan’s lies, and the church drinks from the fountain of divine truth, the separation between the two will remain clear and distinct. But when the woman begins to compromise with Satan and his lies, becoming submerged in his river of falsehood, tragedy follows.”* (Hailey, Revelation, 280)

# The Overall Message

*“Chapter 12 is another chapter of comfort. On multiple levels, God assures them that He will win and so will everyone on His side (that’s us, fellow disciples). Satan will lose as will those on his side (Rome and its followers). Which side would you prefer to be on? What a mighty God we serve.”*

*(Roger Hillis, Chapter Summaries on Revelation)*



**In the end;  
GOD WINS**