

Scene Four: *Seven Signs*

The Woman, the Dragon, and the Child (Chapter 12)

Immediately the question arises, who are these characters?

The Woman is representative of God's people. Faithful Israel, Spiritual Israel. She is described as wearing a victor's crown with twelve stars. This alludes, of course, to her status, even now.

The Dragon, we're told, is that serpent of old, Satan. He is powerful, he is in rage.

The Child is the Messiah. Caught up to God and His throne. He rules (shepherds) the nations with a rod of iron (iron shod staff). *See Psalm 2.*

The conflict described between these three draws heavily from the Egyptian Exodus and portrays the victory of Jesus and His people.

The **1,260 days** in the wilderness is significant. Remember Elijah was nourished in the wilderness for this time. Really, this period speaks more about a state of affairs than time at all. God's people being protected during persecution. It is a word of comfort for the saints. Persecution is coming, yet a place has been prepared by God where He will feed them.

There is a war going on. But this war is already over. In fact, it was over before it ever started. This is Jesus versus the cross. *Jesus wins.* This is the ultimate battle of good and evil. The Dragon versus the Lamb. *Jesus wins.* Satan versus the brethren. *Jesus wins.*

Satan (the deceiver, the accuser) has been cast down. He no longer has any grounds to accuse the brethren. *Why? Three reasons. They overcame him:*

by the blood of the Lamb

Hebrews 10:19-25 - Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

1 John 5:2-8 - By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is

the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear witness: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.

When we are baptized (immersed) in water, we come into contact with the blood of Christ and receive the Holy Spirit. How this all works, I don't exactly know, but I know that it does work – and I believe it. On that Day when we must all give account before the throne – the only acceptable answer will be *“I'm covered by the blood of Jesus.”*

This is one of the greatest beliefs that sets us apart as God's people. Every other religion and the natural inclination of man teaches salvation by works. If you do good - you're saved, if you don't - you're not. Yet this really isn't the case. We **cannot** work our way into heaven. True, with Christ, we will do good, and without Him, Satan will work evil through us, yet this doesn't have to do with the *reason* we're worthy to receive salvation. We're worthy because *Jesus shed His blood. That's it.*

Galatians 3:26-29 - For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

It is through the blood of the Lamb that we are cleansed, sanctified, and brought into communion with the Lord. It is our sealing and our guarantee of inheritance. As also is our baptism and the Spirit we receive. (**Ephesians 1:13-14, Mark 16:16**)

by the word of their testimony

Ephesians 3:8-13 - To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly *places*, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

2 Corinthians 3:2-3 - You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly *you are* an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, *that is*, of the heart.

The Word of God, the Sword of the Spirit. This is what we use to overcome. Not limited to the actual *text* but the **message** it holds. We should strive to be a *living* testimony of the gospel.

they did not love their lives to the death

Romans 12:1-2 - I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

These truths are self-evident: The Kingdom is come. God is in control. He always has been and always will be in control. We walk by faith, not by sight. Yet we ask, *how could God let this happen? Why is this happening to me?* God is in control, He knows what's going on, and it's all geared to advance His Kingdom and ultimately protect His saints.

The point here is to demonstrate that the power behind the persecutors (Rome) has been defeated. Victory is **assured** to the faithful. Now, Satan couldn't defeat Jesus *or* His testimony, the Church. Therefore he persecutes them, and does so using those of world. This is serious stuff. Anyone who does not follow Christ *will* be used by Satan to serve his will. We don't have a say in the matter. Whether it be sin or Christ, we are servants. Next we will see how Satan is manifesting his power on earth through those who practice evil.

The Beasts (Chapter 13)

The Beast from the Sea

Daniel 7:2-8 - Daniel spoke, saying, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. The first *was* like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it. "And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and *had* three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh!' "After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it. "After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It *was* different from all the beasts that *were* before it, and it had ten horns. I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, *were* eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.

This beast represents corrupt secular power; at this time – more specifically – referring to Rome. When nations choose not to follow God, Satan uses them to accomplish his will. He empowers them to do great evil and persecute God's people. The same is true for ourselves. In the ongoing spiritual battle we fight – matters are Light and dark. We are either servants of God or slaves to sin. There's not much room for sitting on the fence or playing from the bench.

The Beast from the Earth

This beast represents religious compromise and corruption. He appears and imitates Christ but does not represent the Truth. This could be anything from a watered-down version of the Gospel to a total and complete abandonment thereof. What the people want to hear, with itching ears.

The Dragon and the Two Beasts form a sort of *unholy trinity* – in every way trying to imitate the Truth, yet missing the mark (sin) so as to deceive, leading ultimately to great destruction.

The Number of Man

Six is the number of man. Day he was created, in fact. As close as it may get, the number always falls just short of seven. Missing the mark. We've spoken previously about the requirements in the Empire to buy and sell in the marketplace. One was required to worship idols and involve themselves in sinful activities. A mark would then be given to show their allegiance. This is an obvious allusion to this practice, yet the full answer, the Spirit says, takes *wisdom*.

The best wisdom I've heard (and take no credit for) is this: John tells us about **three** types of sin: the *lust of the flesh*, the *lust of the eyes*, and the *boastful pride of life* (**1 John 2:16**). Jesus was tempted by Satan in **three** distinct ways (**Luke 4**). In the Garden, Eve was drawn to the fruit for **three** reasons: she saw that the fruit was *good for food*, *pleasing to the eye*, and *desirable to make one wise* (**Genesis 3**). This number has sin written all about it. The mark of the beast, or the number of man is the mark we automatically receive due to sin against God (**14:9**).

The Lamb (Chapter 14)

In contrast to the mark of the beast, we see the people of God given His mark. We've spoken previously about this number of people representing His people, and we've already seen them receiving this seal in chapter seven. Why the repetition? To ensure the point is clear. Throughout this book, we see this type of repetition being used to illustrate different aspects of what's taking place.

Messengers of God come and preach the gospel, followed by the harvest of the earth, seen from two perspectives. The righteous are gathered up to heaven and the evil are sent into torment. This is the Final Judgment scene. It illustrates the nature of God's righteous judgment on the workers of iniquity and ensures the ultimate vindication of the saints.

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If you have questions or need anything at all, please feel free to contact me anytime.

If you don't have a church family to call home, I hope you'll come with us.

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