

The Seed of the Woman and the Serpent

Last Things

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The lesson today is taken from Revelation chapter 12, a new section of the book beginning at verse 1 on page 1,925.

1 A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. 2 She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. 3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. 4 His 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 he might devour her child the moment it was born. 5 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. 6 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. (Revelation 12:1-6)

The word of the Lord. ["Thanks be to God."]

May we pray.

Lord, please help me to be clear and concise as I weave together various things from the Old Testament and the New, that we may understand your word, that we may love your word, that we might find it a most curious and wonderful book, and that we may be changed by both its reading and its proclamation through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Now who is this woman that we've just read about, this woman who's clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars? There should be no doubt about this because it's very clear who this woman is, and if you turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Genesis chapter 37, you'll see exactly who this woman is. And you may recall that Joseph, before he was sold by his jealous brothers into slavery, had dreams, and Joseph was immature. He was a young man, and he didn't know when to keep his mouth shut, and sometimes even old men don't know when to keep their mouth shut, as I can say. So if we look here in verse 9, Genesis 37:9, page 60:

Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. 'Listen,' he said, 'I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.' When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, 'What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?' His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind. (Genesis 37:9-11)

Now think about it for a moment, who is this woman? This woman is Israel, and you can see her there clearly. It's the sun and the moon and the 12 stars. The 11 stars are the brothers of Joseph and Joseph is the twelfth star. So this woman is Israel, very clearly. It's Israel. It's the people of Israel out of whom the Lord Jesus comes. A woman clothed with the sun and the moon and twelve stars, and if you let that sink in for a moment, we will see yet more who this woman is, because it isn't just Israel.

Turn back with me, if you would, to Genesis chapter 3. So clearly, let's see what we've seen in Genesis 37:9. The woman with the sun and the moon and the twelve stars is a reference to God's people in the Old Testament, that is, the line of Abraham going through Abraham to Isaac to Jacob, and Jacob's wife, Rachel, and then the twelve sons of Jacob and his wives. So go back now, if you would, to Genesis chapter 3. We're going to see something else about this woman. This is an important truth, and this is this, if you go to Genesis 3, page 5, you discover the two characters in Revelation 12 appear right here in Genesis 3, beginning verse 1. "Now the serpent," and it's very plain that the serpent is the dragon of Revelation 12, as we'll see in a moment.

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'' (Genesis 3:1)

Notice the craftiness and subtlety of the serpent (Hebrew: nāḥāš, נָחָשׁ; Greek: óphis, ὄφις). And who is the serpent? It's just not some old snake. It's not like a water moccasin as we have those in our backyard because we're on a lake. It's not like a copperhead that are very dangerous because they hide in the leaves. It's not a rattler. It's Satan himself which Revelation 12 makes very plain (Revelation 12:9).

And so he says, notice its subtlety. He plants an idea by exaggerating what God had said. Did God say they couldn't eat any fruit? No, of course not. And so he insinuates something, and he gets her trapped into talking. You don't want to ever talk with the devil. He'll always win. And so he gets her to open up and to interact with him and she says, "Oh no, no, no." Verse 2,

2 We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' Genesis 3:2-3)

And she amplifies it a little bit. God didn't say they couldn't touch it. Of course, it's probably smart not to touch it. But he said, notice what she corrects, and then notice what Satan, because that's who it is very clearly in Revelation 12, Satan, the devil, the ancient snake, the dragon, he says,

4 'You will not surely die,' the serpent said to the woman. 5 'For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' Genesis 3:4-5)

And you think that's the essence of sin, isn't it, "to be as God." That's the great quest of humanity, "I want to be like God." Not in the sense that I want to be godly, but I want what I want, what I want, and I don't care what God wants."

That's the essence of the original sin. "I don't care what God has said. I see it. I want it. I'm asserting my own, (big word) human autonomy, my

independence from God. I don't need God to tell me what to do. I am the master of my fate, and I am the one who decides for me what's right and wrong."

Isn't it the essence of sin that's passed down through the generations? And so notice he says you'll be as gods, and it's because the Hebrew word Elohim ('elōhiym, אֱלֹהִים) is a plural word, and when applied to Yahweh, the God of the Bible, it's singular, even though it's a plural noun in Hebrew.

You'll be as gods knowing, the Hebrew verb can imply two things, or actually several things, one of the things it implies is determination, determining for yourselves good and evil.

"I'll decide. This doesn't feel right for me. I'm going to follow my heart. You don't know my life situations. Don't apply those verses to me. I'm going to follow my heart. I must be true to myself. I must be authentic and make my own choices." You'll be as gods determining for yourselves good and evil, and you'll experience it. Truth by experience (yāda', יָדָע, Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner (1958) *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E. J. Brill), pp. 390-392). Experimentation.

How do you know adultery is wrong unless you've tried it? How do you know suicide is wrong unless you've tried it? I'm being absurd, but that's the basic essence. Experiencing it, determining for yourselves. And so, notice what happens.

6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. (Genesis 3:6)

Now he's standing there watching all this and like a typical guy, he's not asserting himself there to say, "What are you doing?" He's not saying to the snake, "Get away from my wife, boy!" He's just passive. Men are amazing creatures. I am one. We're just amazing at what we ignore and then what we focus on. And so she gives it to him and he ate it. Then verse 7,

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened,

What does that mean? It means for the first time they understood good and evil. They'd never known evil before, only good. They'd only experienced goodness. They'd only experienced unbroken fellowship with God.

How long had they lived this way? We don't know. It could have been for decades. We don't know. The Bible doesn't tell us. But they had only known beauty, harmony, wholeness in the whole of life. Never pain, no arthritis. No hip pain or knee pain. No needing to have your eyes worked on or wearing hearing aids. None of that. And absolute marital bliss.

Nobody here knows that. If you've been married very long, as soon as the honeymoon's over, as soon as the honeymoon's over, your eyes are opened and you say, "What have I done?" Because none of us is perfect. All of us are flawed. And what happens when the honeymoon's over is we begin to see the person we married and we think, "Oh my. Oh my. This person is selfish. This person is self-centered." There's a little narcissist inside every single one of us.

Their eyes are both opened. The first thing they realize is that they're naked. Now before that, they were completely transparent in all of their living. They had no secrets. There was nothing they didn't share with each other. Their bodies were unclothed. They felt no shame. They lived in a perfect place of bliss.

I believe that biblical scholars are right in saying that the garden of Eden was this garden on top of a mountain, and they knew peace and harmony. You know the thing, "When the moon is in the seventh house and Jupiter aligns with Mars." They had perfect peace, no discord, no suspicion. No, "Who were you talking to? Who was on the phone with you? Who's texting you?" All of the modern things. Perfect peace, harmony, and perfect beauty.

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. (Genesis 3:7)

That's an interesting thing. Only God can cover our nakedness, but we have amazing things that we use to cover up our own nakedness.

When I took a lot of psychology back in the '60s, we would call many of those things ego defense mechanisms. And there are all kinds: just read any

book, and you see we're adept at making fig leaves to cover up our nakedness. The trouble with fig leaves is they don't really cover. They don't really cover, and we appear to ourselves to be well clothed and well protected, but we're like the emperor who had no clothes. People see through us. All of our bravado, and this and that, turning the tables on others, all those things other people can see and God can see. And then look at verse 8.

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man, 'Where are you?' 10 He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.' (Genesis 3:8-10)

And the worst hiding that we do isn't from our spouse or our parents or our children, it's from God himself. And that's always so amazing when we think about it because God sees through you and through me. Absolutely. There's nothing in your heart that God doesn't know. So it's not just external behavior, or even the words, or any of those things; it's the intentions of the heart. He sees right through you, and we think we can hide from God with religiosity, with ritual and this and that? Nothing wrong with ritual, but if we use them as means to hide from God and hide from others, we're simply delusional.

Verse 11:

11 And he said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?' (Genesis 3:11)

Now notice immediately, this is a course in psychology, immediately what happens. Look at what he does, verse 12, turning the tables. "Not my fault. It's not my fault. It's the woman you gave me." He's blaming God. Do you ever blame God for things? Am I alone in that, blaming God? "Why did you make me like this? Why did you do this and that?" He turns the tables, and he throws his wife under the bus, except they didn't have buses in Eden. And so,

12 The man said, ‘The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.’ 13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’ (Genesis 3:12-13)

Again, blame shifting, always blaming somebody else. “I couldn’t help it. The devil made me do it.” And then the serpent and you’ve got to remember who this is. This is not an ordinary snake. This is Satan, as we’ll see in a moment, in the guise of a serpent.

14 So the LORD God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, ‘Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. (Genesis 3:14)

Now look at verse 15. This is very critical. This is Pachelbel’s Canon, that in this great symphony that is the book of Revelation.

Cf. The unity of John’s book, then, is neither chronological nor arithmetical, but artistic, like that of a musical theme with variations, each variation adding something new to the significance of the whole composition. This is the only view which does adequate justice to the double fact that each new series of visions both recapitulates and develops the themes already stated in what has gone before. (G. B. Caird (1966), *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (London: Black), p. 106)

This is in the book of Revelation what we’re about to read.

15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers (Genesis 3:15).

That’s a critical verse. Notice further as we turn the page.

He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel. (Genesis 3:15)

And then notice verse 16.

16 To the woman he said, 'I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children (Cf. Revelation 12:2). Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.' 17 To Adam he said, 'Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' 'Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. 18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.' 20 Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living. (Genesis 3:16-20)

And then we see in verse 21, God provides for them.

21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. 22 And the LORD God said, 'The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. (Genesis 3:21-22)

Think of it, who is God speaking to? I think that God is addressing the heavenly council because the Bible clearly indicates that God has a council surrounding him of heavenly beings (1 Kings 22:19-22; Psalm 82). There's only one God, that's the God of the Bible. The Hebrew word for him is Yahweh (יהוה). But he has counselors, and we'll go in that another time. And so he says, since that's happened,

He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever.' (Genesis 3:21-22)

I want you to think about the blessing of death. It is a blessing to die rather than to live in a sin-cursed world with a sin-cursed nature in ourselves. I mean, think of life as it is right now and this is the deal, it was the mercy of God that drove Adam and Eve out of the garden of Eden lest they would reach their hand and take that sacramental fruit that would have caused them to live forever in a fallen state, in jealousy, in bitterness, and all of the terrible things that unfold in the book of Genesis with their first two boys there, Cain and Abel. Home-schooled, home-churched, totally protected, a

perfect environment, and yet the boy murders his brother. All of the wickedness and evil that was in their hearts. It was the mercy of God to keep them from eating of that fruit of life, and therefore God sends his Son.

Now turn with me, if you will, back to Revelation chapter 12. Revelation chapter 12 and we see these things here. Who is this woman? Well, this woman is Eve.

“I thought you said she was Israel?” She is Israel. She’s also Eve. She’s Eve. She is the mother of all the living. She is the one through whose bloodline the Redeemer would come. And we see this further as we go on and look at verse 2, “She was pregnant,” Revelation 12:2, “and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.” (Cf. Genesis 3:16)

You see the curse of Genesis visited here, the woman who’s giving birth? Of course, it’s the Virgin Mary, isn’t it? Yes. But it’s also Eve. She’s about to give birth, and she’s in agony. “Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon.”

And notice as we look down, we see something quite remarkable. In verse 9, Revelation 12:9, “The great dragon (drákōn, δράκων) was hurled down—that ancient serpent (óphis, ὄφις) called the devil (diábolos, διάβολος), or Satan (Satanás, Σατανᾶς), who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.” So think about it for a moment. Who is the snake in the garden? Who’s the ancient snake? He’s the devil. He’s Satan. He is the red dragon. Wow.

And so all these motifs from Genesis are woven here in this section of Revelation, and I want you to notice something else, and we see this war in heaven in verse 4, we won’t go into it now, but you look in verse 4 at the second sentence, the dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth so that he might gobble down her child at the moment it was born, and that takes us to something very interesting.

Have you ever seen a puppet show? And what’s happening in a puppet show is you have these actors down below, these marionettes, but if you could pull back the curtain, you see they’re being manipulated, and you know what happens in the birth of Jesus.

There's a megalomaniacal man named Herod the Great, and he's being manipulated by Satan himself. And Herod the Great wants to kill the Christ child. He goes to great lengths to do it. The amazing thing is, contrary to manger scenes, is that by the time he knows about the birth of the Christ child, the shepherds have come and gone, Christ has been circumcised, and then the sacrifice for the purification of a woman after childbirth has taken place 40 days after Christ's birth in the temple in Jerusalem, and then they've left (Luke 2:21-39; Leviticus 12).

And so by the time the wise men come, which was somewhere between shortly after the birth and up to two years, because that's what Herod did, he wiped out all the boys of Bethlehem in its area, two years old and under, they're warned and they leave (Matthew 2:1-12, 16). But it's Herod. But who's really trying to devour the child of the Virgin Mary? It's Satan himself, the great red dragon, the devil, Diabolus. He's the ancient snake doing it, and he's doing it through Herod.

Now, I want you to notice something else here. I'd like you to turn with me back to the left to 1 Timothy chapter 2. 1 Timothy chapter 2 and that's this. 1 Timothy chapter 2 and that will be on page 1,847, and I want you to notice what he says here beginning in verse 12. "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent."

Now this is our focus, verse 13, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve."

Now verse 14 is critical:

And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. (1 Timothy 2:14)

Let that sink in for a moment. "It was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner," and God meant for the man to be a covering, a protector for the woman, and he failed to do it. His sin is the greater sin. We inherit the sin of Adam, not the sin of Eve, and he's saying that if a woman is to teach or to speak, she must be under that authority of a man. That's why my wife wears a head covering, and otherwise she should be silent.

Notice again what he says because this is critical to what we're thinking about, "And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner" (1 Timothy 2:14).

Now verse 15 is where we really wanted to go, but I don't like to omit teaching to get to the point. I want to show things in their context. "But women," notice the footnote at the bottom, Greek, "she." It doesn't say women. It says, "She will be saved through childbirth," verse 15, or restored through childbearing, "if they continue in faith and love and holiness with propriety."

I want to see if I can sum this up. I've left you with an obscure passage that some people really choke on and chafe under, but here's the essence of it.

Who is the woman of Revelation 12? She's Israel, clearly, Genesis 37:9, the woman clothed in the sun with the moon under her feet and the twelve stars.

But if we really go back, she's Eve. And who is the woman of verse 15? It's Eve. It's Eve. Humanity lost its standing with God, and by Adam death came to all of us, all of the chaos, all of the trouble (Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:21).

Here's the beautiful thing of Revelation 12 in light of 1 Timothy 2:15: it's Eve.

Eve is in one way the woman of Revelation 12, and it's through her giving birth to the Lord Jesus Christ that she's free and all her children are free and it's in Eve's act in the person of the Virgin Mary that you and I are saved.

That's why Christmas is so important. Christmas is so important because it's all about Eve's failure and Eve's victory. It's all about humanity's loss in our first parents and humanity's redemption. And so in this sense, we may think that Eve who caused humanity to stumble and fall in the garden of Eden, in the person of her descendant, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Eve redeems us.

("And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers. **He will crush your head**, and you will strike his heel." (Genesis 3:15). That is a daughter of Eve.

It is woman. It is woman that God chose to bring redemption to the world. Think about the nobility, then, of woman. A woman has restored what she

lost in her mother Eve. She wins in that daughter of Eve, the blessed Virgin Mary.

But Mary also is a picture for all women everywhere, and their redemption comes through the birth of Christ. You see, a lot of people say, “Well, the Bible really doesn’t make a lot to do with the birth of Christ.” Oh no, it really does.

It has a great deal to say about the birth of Christ. Luke is extensive in his treatment of the birth of Christ (Luke 1-2) and so is Matthew (Matthew 1-2), the adventure of the birth of Christ, the malice of the great red dragon, working, manipulating through the politician Herod the Great. All of those things in that amazing story.

The birth of Christ is significant. Without the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, we don’t have salvation.

And it’s through a woman. And she, woman, will be saved in the childbirth, and that childbirth is the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is clearly in view in Revelation 12, because he’s caught up, that is, he ascends to heaven (Acts 1:9-11; 2:31-36). And so much more here in that chapter that, God willing, we’ll look at next week.

But I want us to focus then for a moment, the Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s Supper speaks to us of a flesh and blood Savior. “This is my body,” said Jesus as he lifted the bread, and he blessed it. “Blessed are you Lord God of the universe who gives us bread.”

And as he broke it, this bread reminds me of Christmas. This bread reminds me that the Lord Jesus Christ took on himself a real and true humanity. He’s a human being just like you and me. When you take a piece of this bread and you put it in your mouth, I want you to remember this: God Almighty, without ceasing to be God, became a real human being just like you and me, except he didn’t have a sinful nature, and he didn’t sin—tempted in all the ways you and I are (Hebrews 4:15).

When you bite into this bread, I want you to think of this truth: Almighty God became a real human being with flesh and blood and bones, and he was born of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Christmas. And through that woman,

through the woman, through that descendant of Eve, I'm saved because without a true humanity, the death of Jesus is ineffective.

May we pray.

Lord, we pray that you would bless as we take the Lord's Supper, you would help us remember that the Lord Jesus Christ became a real human being, very God of very God, begotten not made, and also a truly human being.

Lord, may we appreciate Jesus afresh this first Sunday of Advent as we celebrate woman, the key to Adam's great sin through which we all lost everything, but also the key to the redemption of the world because she gave birth to the eternal Son of God in his human nature. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.