

ANOTHER CHRISTMAS STORY

Saturday, March 4

Reading: Revelation 12

Revelation 12:3 *Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads. 4 Its 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 it might devour her Child the moment He 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.*

At Christmastime we often turn to the gospels of Matthew and Luke to read the story of Jesus' birth. We follow Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, angels, and wise men as they experience the birth of Christ. Here in Revelation we get a different perspective on those events.

Revelation 12 gives us a grand sweep of history. It begins with the appearance of "a woman clothed with the sun." Some have suggested that this woman represents the church or the Virgin Mary. But John is pulling symbolism from Joseph's dream in Genesis 37. The mention of the sun, moon, and twelve stars clearly identifies this woman as the nation of Israel (as it did in Joseph's dream). Jesus Christ was born from the Jewish nation.

Verse 3-4 introduces us to the dragon that represents Satan (see 12:9). His story starts at the beginning of time when Satan rebelled against God and took a third of the angels with him. We next see the dragon poised to destroy the Child Jesus at the moment of His birth. This reminds us that Satan was really the one behind King Herod's plot to eliminate the newborn King.

Verse 5 gives us an abbreviated version of Jesus' life. John quotes Psalm 2:9 to remind us that Jesus' ultimate destiny is to rule the nations. This is what Satan is always trying to prevent. Christ's victory was made possible by His death and resurrection after which He was "snatched up" to heaven.

But Satan is not through. Verses 6-17 tell us of a future war. Today, Satan still has access to the throne of God to accuse believers (12:10; Job 1-2). But one day the archangel Michael and the heavenly armies will cast Satan out of heaven for good. This defeat enrages Satan and he takes it out on Israel. However, God will supernaturally protect His people for these last 3 ½ years (1260 days). This "time of Jacob's trouble" is described in other Bible passages as well (Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:21-22).

POINTS TO PONDER:

As we think about the true meaning of Christmas, let us remember that Satan would like nothing more than to obscure it with other things. The legends and trappings of the season can distract us from the real story - Jesus Christ came to die to save us from our sins. Revelation 12:11 reminds us of how to have real victory and joy - "They triumphed over [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony." Are you telling the real Christmas story?