

Doctrinal Summary of The Great Dragon of the Tribulation-Satan Himself

In Revelation 12:9 identifies a great dragon at work during the tribulation who is none other than Satan himself.

“And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world, he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”

The word “dragon” is translated from the Koine Greek word δράκων (“dra-kohn”) which refers to a type of legendary or mythical creature depicted in some form as a giant winged serpent of the sky or sea. While different cultures adopted various mythological forms and types of dragons, the dragon identified by John is not a myth. He is identified as being one and the same as the “serpent of old” referencing the serpent who was in the garden of Eden (cf. Gen. 3:1ff) at the fall of man. John also identifies him as “the devil” and “Satan” leaving no doubt as to who the great dragon is in the tribulation.

The word “devil” is translated from the Koine Greek word διάβολος (“di-ah-bol-os”) which literally means, “one who separates and divides through false accusations or slander against another and their character, based on initiation.” It refers to an individual who targets another being and uses false accusations and slander to divide others away from the individual being targeted. The purpose of the slander and false accusations is to cause doubt in the one being accused and slandered by those who hear it in order that they lose trust in the one being accused and slandered.

The word “Satan” is translated from the Koine Greek words ὁ Σατανᾶς (“sah-tah-nahs”) which literally mean, “the adversary, based on initiation.” Satan is God’s adversary, acting in opposition against God and doing so based on his own initiation. God did not cause Satan’s antagonistic opposition, Satan chose it himself. He has been the constant adversary against God since before the existence of man and will continue to be so during the tribulation as well. His slanderous attack against God was successful in sweeping away one third of all the angels (cf. Rev. 12:4).

The great dragon is described as red in color (symbolizing an eagerness and readiness to spread bloodshed), having seven heads (symbolizing the depth of his wisdom; knowing how to use information in one’s circumstances; cf. Gen. 3:1), ten horns (symbolizing his desire for universal power over the world), and seven crowns (symbolizing his objective of complete authority over man) (cf. Rev. 12:3). His eagerness to spread bloodshed is evident in his alertness to the birth of the Messiah in order that he might kill him and keep God from carrying out His gracious salvific plan for sinful man (cf. Rev. 12:4.) He was unsuccessful.

In the middle of the tribulation the dragon is seen with his angels fighting a great war in heaven, indicating that Satan & Company continue to have access to heaven until the middle of the tribulation when they, after losing are no longer able to access heaven (cf. Rev. 12:7-9). At this time he will be granted to give power to the tribulational beast (cf. Rev. 13:1-10, esp. v.4) and will receive the worship of man. Using the beast and his false prophet, the dragon will deceive man through signs and wonders, convincing man to join him in battle against God. But God will bind him for the millennial reign (cf. Rev. 20:2-3) and then cast him into the lake of fire where he, the beast, and the false prophet will be tormented day and night forever and ever (cf. Rev. 20:10).