

Rev. 12:1-6 And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman <sup>e</sup>clothed with <sup>f</sup>the sun, with <sup>g</sup>the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. <sup>2</sup> She was pregnant and <sup>h</sup>was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. <sup>3</sup> And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great <sup>i</sup>red dragon, <sup>j</sup>with seven heads and <sup>k</sup>ten horns, and on his heads <sup>l</sup>seven diadems. <sup>4</sup> His tail swept down <sup>m</sup>a third of the stars of heaven and <sup>n</sup>cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child <sup>o</sup>he might devour it. <sup>5</sup> She gave birth to a male child, <sup>p</sup>one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was <sup>q</sup>caught up to God and to his throne, <sup>6</sup> and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for <sup>r</sup>1,260 days.

Our text this week begins with a “Great Sign.” In the very first verse of this Book we are told that the events that are spoken of in The Revelation are “shortly to take place.” But there we are also told that they are “signified” by His Angel. The Book of Revelation, as we have discussed in the past is a book that is absolutely full of signs and symbols, so the fact that we are seeing a symbol here should not surprise us, but we should definitely take notice that this sign is called great. We are meant to take notice.

This sign is so “great” that to miss the importance of this sign would make it not possible to understand the rest of the Book. As I have mentioned several times in our study of this fascinating Book, These signs or symbols are throughout the Book, but interpreting their meaning is not about guesswork, the meanings of the signs and symbols in the Book are taken from the rest of Scripture. John assumed the readers of this Book would be familiar with the images and symbols found throughout the Bible. The images he uses in writing this Book were not, as is commonly expressed today, a vision of future technology that John could not understand, and so he described what he saw as best as he could with his limited Knowledge. No, the images John used were vivid Biblical images, that many modern day interpreters cannot understand so they attempt to interpret using their limited knowledge.

The question that must be asked is where do these signs and symbols come from, and what are they about? The first sign in this “Great Wonder,” is a woman. We are given a detailed description of her, which we will look at as we move on, but the fact that the sign is a woman, should trigger all of our Biblical senses.

There are many “mixed metaphors” in this Book, for example. The central character of the Book could be said to be the lamb. You may recall that in Revelation 4 and 5 John is taken up into the throne room of God in the heavens, while He is there, there is a drama that is unfolding. There is a scroll with contents unknown that is sealed by 7 seals. Seals, as we should be aware were placed on ancient documents or Scrolls, and only the person with the authority and power to unleash the seal could do so. If the Seals had been tampered with it would be known by He who it was intended. Anyway, in our

drama, there is no one worthy to unleash the Seals, until one like unto a lamb who had been slain appears. Of course this lamb is worthy and He opens up the Seals, and their judgments are then poured out. Who the lamb is, is not a great mystery, It is Jesus Christ.

I know we have talked about this, but the reason I bring it up is to get it into our head, that just because the Lord Jesus is the Lamb in Chapter 4 and 5 does not take away from the fact that He is the One standing in the midst of the Candlesticks in Chapter 1, it does not take away from the fact He is the rider on the White Horse in Chapter 6 and in Chapter 19, and it does not mean He does not appear as other symbols at other points in the Book.

Likewise the woman is a very important symbol. The word woman, or women is used 19 times in the Book of Revelation. This has led at least one commentator to suggest that the woman symbol is almost as important as the lamb. Well, who is the woman? The first prophetic mention of the woman in the Bible is all the way back in Genesis 3. This is a verse we have gone over before but it is worth repeating. In the third chapter of Genesis Adam and Eve have eaten of the forbidden fruit. The sentence for this sin, as with the wages of all sin, was death, and yet when God passed sentence upon the serpent for his role in this deception, along with that judgment was the promise of redemption for mankind

"I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your seed, and her Seed;  
He shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise his heel.

This judgment passed upon the serpent also prophecies the coming of the Messiah who would be the seed or the offspring of the woman. Now what is interesting about this, and the Apostle Paul confirms this, This offspring, or this seed ultimately finds its fulfillment in one person. The He, that would crush the head of the Serpent, is Jesus Christ.

Throughout the Old Testament the people of God are often spoken of using the symbol of a woman. Now before I go into what some of these symbols are, I want to talk about who the Old Testament people of God are or were.

There is a modern teaching, that is quite popular that teaches that the Church was not born until the Day of Pentecost. The word that is translated as Church in our New Testament is the Greek Word *ἐκκλησία*. A literal translation is "Called out Ones" or "Called out Assembly," In the Greek Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, the word for the assembly or the congregation when in the Wilderness and throughout most of the Old Testament period was the Hebrew Word *קהל* It is interesting that usually when this word is found in the Old Testament speaking of the people of God the word that the Septuagint uses to translate is the word *ἐκκλησία*. The idea that the Church is an entirely new thing, never heard of before Pentecost is not backed up by study of the Scripture. When we read about the people of God in the Old Testament it is important that we understand that this is our people. These people are our Spiritual Ancestors. In Acts 7:37 when Stephen was preaching his final sermon he called them out as the Church in the Wilderness.

That being said we must recognize this woman as the Church in the form of Old Covenant Israel. This woman, is the bearer of the promised seed. She is clothed with the Son and has the moon under her feet. Remember these are not just pretty symbols they are actually taken from the Scriptures. The Bridegroom, which we all recognize as Christ Jesus is described in Revelation 1:16 as having a countenance that is like the sun shining in its strength. It is fitting and something that we have spent a little time speaking of in the past that the Bride should reflect the Glory of her husband.

She is described as having the moon under her feet. In the Song of Solomon Chapter 6 the Bride is described as

she who looks forth as the morning,  
Fair as the moon,  
Clear as the sun,  
Awesome as *an army* with banners?

Here we are seeing the woman who is preparing to bring forth a child. This *motif* is one of the oldest in all of the Bible. The seed of the woman that will crush the serpents head. I have often before shared some of my favorite Bible Stories with you. Sadly many of these stories are left out of the modern Sunday School curriculum because they are considered too disturbing or too violent for our younger viewers. I have said it before, that I believe the reason for this is that no one wants to make it into a flannel gram. This is problematic. Enmity and conflict are at the heart of the redemptive story, and if we shelter our children away from these truths they may forget that we are actually in a war.

I want to give us three examples of foreshadowing s of this conflict of the seeds. There are two women in the Bible that are given the title "Most Blessed among women." One is Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the other is Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite. Many people who have grown up in Church have no clue who Jael is. Thanks to Jamie Soles our children are probably not in that camp. Sisera was an enemy of God. He was the seed of the serpent. He was oppressing God's people. In Judges 5 there is a song that tells of Jael's victory over Sisera.

"Most blessed among women is Jael,  
The wife of Heber the Kenite;  
Blessed is she among women in tents.  
<sup>25</sup>He asked for water, she gave milk;  
She brought out cream in a lordly bowl.  
<sup>26</sup>She stretched her hand to the tent peg,  
Her right hand to the workmen's hammer;  
She pounded Sisera, she pierced his head,  
She split and struck through his temple.  
<sup>27</sup>At her feet he sank, he fell, he lay still;

At her feet he sank, he fell;  
Where he sank, there he fell dead.  
<sup>28</sup>“The mother of Sisera looked through the window,  
And cried out through the lattice,  
‘Why is his chariot so long in coming?  
Why tarries the clatter of his chariots?’  
<sup>29</sup>Her wisest ladies answered her,  
Yes, she answered herself,  
<sup>30</sup>‘Are they not finding and dividing the spoil:  
To every man a girl *or* two;  
For Sisera, plunder of dyed garments,  
Plunder of garments embroidered and dyed,  
Two pieces of dyed embroidery for the neck of the looter?’  
<sup>31</sup>“Thus let all Your enemies perish, O LORD!  
But *let* those who love Him *be* like the sun  
When it comes out in full strength.”

A lot of time could be spent talking about Jael, but let us point out just a few things.

First: Notice how the tyrant was defeated. His head was crushed. Notably this crushing was inflicted at the hands of a woman.

Secondly: Notice the, not too veiled mockery, that is involved in the end of the song when the people of God mock Sisera's mother as she waits for her son to return from his latest conquest. Her song laments that perhaps he as grabbed a girl or two in celebration of His victory. I don't think it is unintentional that women are portrayed by the mother of Sisera as items to be conquered, while it was a woman that ultimately crushed the head of this wicked pagan.

and Thirdly, notice how God's people are portrayed in the last line of the song. "Let those who love Him be like the sun, when it comes out in full strength."

Another story in the Book of Judges that receives very little attention is the story of Abimelech. YOU can read about this story in Judges 9. Here is the brief run down: Abimelech was the Son of Gideon. Now Gideon had 70 sons, but Abimelech is the one where we are told his name. The reason for that is because Abimelech killed all of his brothers. But he did not just kill them, he sacrificed them. He tried to have himself enthroned as King and to do this he sacrificed his brothers on a stone of Sacrifice. He later rode out to battle and in his attempt to burn down a tower we read this:

<sup>52</sup>So Abimelech came as far as the tower and fought against it; and he drew near the door of the tower to burn it with fire. <sup>53</sup>But a certain woman dropped an upper millstone on Abimelech's head and crushed

his skull. <sup>54</sup> Then he called quickly to the young man, his armor bearer, and said to him, "Draw your sword and kill me, lest men say of me, 'A woman killed him.'" So his young man thrust him through, and he died.

Here we have an unnamed woman, who uses a upper millstone, to crush the head of a certain man who had very "serpentish" tendencies. Abimelech does his best to avoid the dilemma by having his armor bearer run Him through, but to those who know of Abimelech He is known as one who was slain by a woman. Thus we have another account of the seed of the woman, crushing the head of the seed of the serpent.

The third one I want to bring up is one of the more well known accounts in the Old Testament and that is probably the story where it is easiest to see the connection between the Seed of the Woman and the Seed of the Serpent. The Story is of David and Goliath. David obviously represents the Seed of the Woman in this passage. Notice the woman, Israel, is under severe oppression in 1 Samuel 17. The armies of the Philistines, and the armies of Israel are lined up on the field of battle. The Philistines, however, have a champion named Goliath. Goliath is a giant. The Bible describes him as being 6 cubits and a span tall. That is probably about 9 foot 6 inches tall. The armies are gathered in the Valley of Elah and Goliath comes forth every day and challenges the Israelites by saying, "Why have you come to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us." He then said "I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man that we may fight together." Goliath was a fighting man of war. He wore a helmet of bronze, and he was armed with a coat of scale mail. Of all the armor he could of war it is interesting that He wore armor patterned after the armor of a serpent or a dragon. His armor was of scale. His coat was 5,000 shekels of Bronze (125 lbs), and he had bronze armor on his legs, and he carried a javelin of bronze between his shoulders. And the shaft of his spear was like a weavers beam and the head of his spear weighed 600 shekels. (15 lbs)

Well, we know what happened, The Seed of the woman, a shepherd, came forth and using a sling slew Goliath, and he did it by crushing his head. The Dragon and his seed seemed almost certain to prevail here, but that is not what happened. This theme, or motif is frequent in the Scripture.

Jesus told us that the thief, which is the serpent, came only to steal, to kill and to destroy. That is who he is, that is what he does. He has not changed. He continues to wage war against the seed of the woman. He is a destroyer, and he seeks to devour human flesh. I do understand, and it is important for all of us to understand that ultimately the seed of the woman is Christ and all that are His, but in the Bible when we see certain themes repeated we should take note. Here in Revelation 12 we have a Great Red Dragon, getting ready to devour the child. If the child can be destroyed before He is born, or before He comes into his power then the dragon will win.

Through the Old Testament we see this warfare of the Seeds. The enemy attempts to contaminate the seed line, through intermarriage, through wickedness and sometimes in just plain cold blooded murder. In Exodus, the Egyptians, in their attempt to destroy the Hebrews, the chosen race from whom Messiah

would come, there is an order to drown all the young males. Of course, God raises up a redeemer from the very waters of death. At the birth of Christ, Herod, in jealousy of the coming King had all of the male children 2 years and younger in the region of Bethlehem slaughtered. And yet we know Satan's schemes fall flat. There are numerous attempts in Scripture to taint or destroy the promised seed, Pastor Stoos has dealt with many of these in our journey through Genesis. It is a theme of the Old Testament, and that is why this is here in Revelation 12. The enmity in Genesis 3 that God has put between the two lines is pervasive.

We know today that Christ has prevailed. But as the Kingdoms of this world are becoming the Kingdom of our Christ we still see the work of Satan active in this world. To many this is a source of great confusion. They misunderstand his work. They do not understand that He is already defeated. In fact you can often hear them when discussing the events of the day speaking of their inevitability. After all, according to them, things must get worse before the Lord returns and actually deals with Satan's evil.

Well, Satan has already been defeated. So the questions comes then "Why are things so bad?" I could try and talk to you and convince you that things are better now than they have ever been, which worldwide I believe to be true, but you might just look at me as though I was crazy. Well then, how do we answer the question? If Satan is defeated, and make no mistake he is, why are things not as good as I would like them to be?

Well, I am going to try and explain that? The woman clothed with the Sun, who brings forth the man child is meant to be a picture of the people of God. She is meant to reflect His glory. Sometimes we do well on this front, other times...not so well. As we reflect the glory of God one of the things that happens is we begin to gain his heart and mind. We begin to care for the things He cares about. One of the problems, in America at least, is that we have begun to reflect not the attitude of God, but of other things.

This week we have witnessed an astonishing amount of coverage on the grotesque and abominable actions of Planned Parenthood. I am a big supporter of the movement against Planned Parenthood. Planned Parenthood is the largest single abortion provider in the United States. 40% of the nearly 60,000,000 abortions performed in this country since 1973 have been done at Planned Parenthood. What is shocking, and somewhat sad though, is what sparked so many to outrage, is the idea of the selling of body parts. I guess plain vanilla murder does not spark the outrage it once did.

I find it interesting, that the very same evils practiced by Pharaoh, Herod, and all the Biblical enemies of God are still being used today. And they are of course performed with satanic nuance and under tricky deceptive names like "Planned Parenthood." Planned Parenthood sounds nice. There is a reason they don't call themselves, Abortions R Us.

For years the Church has been largely silent in the face of what could rightly be called one of the greatest evils in the History of the world. There have been scattered voices of opposition, but in large part the church has been silent. She has been a reflection of the Spirit of the Age. She has refused to repent of her own sin, and has reflected not our Lord, but the Dragon. We have been called to reflect Christ and His glory and instead we have reflected, so called respectable idols, and thought that was

good enough. Well, in Psalms 104 we are given a description of our awesome God. Our Lord is covered with light as with a garment, and he stretches out the heavens as a tent. 1 John tells us that In Him, is no darkness at all. But to people who have been entrenched in darkness, the light can be a frightening place. In John 1 the Scripture tells us that The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot understand it. Well, that is our calling, we are to reflect a light that is incomprehensible to the world. We fail when we try to dim or alter that light to make it more compatible with what the world seeks. The Scripture is clear that the enemies of God love death more than they love light, they love darkness more than they love the truth. But there hostility and inability to comprehend who and what we are about in no way changes our responsibility.

The woman in this passage is said to flee into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God for her. She is then nourished for 1,260 days. The 1,260 days is the same as 42 months or three and a half years. This should make us think back to the time when the Prophet Elijah had fled into the wilderness and was nourished by the ravens. During this time the nation of Israel was characterized by apostasy, and yet during a 3 1/2 year drought the Lord nourished his prophet. In the next sermon on this passage we will look with a little more detail at the growing conflict. But it is important to recognize that while the war rages the Lord has prepared a place for those who are His.

Pastor Stoos mentioned that he was going to sometime in our not too distant future give a few sermons on the worship of the Church. Worship is one of those things that is often overlooked as an integral part of a Christians duty. Yes, we talk about it and we discuss it, but what it is that worship does is it transforms us. It takes us from the Kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of light, it changes us. We must remember that the battle we wage is a spiritual battle, and it cannot be fought by a people who have not been and who are not continually being changed into the image of our Lord.

In just a moment we are going to be singing one of my favorite Psalms that we learned last year at family camp. The song sings of the majesty of our Lord. My Soul thy Great Creator Praise. Our Lord is described as being clothed in Splendor and Majesty. Remember though, the woman who is clothed with the Sun, who is a representative of the people of God is meant to reflect the Lord's glory. It is my prayer that as our hearts continue to worship rightly that we more rightly see our place in the ultimate battle.