

# The Apocalypse of John

Revelation chapters 12 and 13

Next appeared a great portent in heaven, a woman robed with the sun, beneath her feet the moon, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant, and in the anguish of her labour she cried out to be delivered. Then a second portent appeared in heaven: a great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns; on his heads were seven diadems, and with his tail he swept down a third of the stars in the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that when her child was born he might devour it.<sup>1</sup> She gave birth to a male child, who is destined to rule all nations with an iron rod. But her child was snatched up to God and his throne; and the woman herself fled into the wilds, where she had a place prepared for her by God, there to be sustained for twelve hundred and sixty days.

Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels waged war upon the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought, but they had not the strength to win, and no foothold was left them in heaven. So the great dragon was thrown down, that **serpent** of old that led the whole world astray, whose name is Satan, or the Devil—thrown down to the earth, and his angels with him.

Then I heard a voice in heaven proclaiming aloud: “This is the hour of victory for our God, the hour of his sovereignty and power, when his Christ comes to his rightful rule! For the accuser of our brothers is overthrown, who day and night accused them before our God. By the sacrifice of the Lamb they have conquered him, and by the testimony which they uttered;<sup>2</sup> for they did not hold their lives too dear to lay them down. Rejoice then, you heavens and you that dwell in them! But woe to you, earth and sea, for the Devil has come down to you in great fury, knowing that his time is short!”

When the dragon found that he had been thrown down to the earth, he went in pursuit of the woman who had given birth to the male child. But the woman was given two great eagle's wings, to fly to the place in the wilds where for three years and a half she was to be sustained, out of reach of the serpent. From his mouth the serpent spewed a flood of water after the woman to sweep her away with its spate. But the earth came to her rescue and opened its mouth and swallowed the river which the dragon spewed from his mouth. At this the dragon grew furious with the woman, and went off to wage war on the rest of her offspring, that is, on those who keep God's commandments and maintain their testimony to Jesus.

**T**hen I stood by the sea-shore and out of the sea I saw a beast rising. It had ten horns and seven heads. On its horns were ten diadems, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw was like a leopard, but its feet were like a bear's and its mouth like a lion's mouth. The dragon conferred upon it his power and rule, and great authority. One of its heads appeared to have received a death-blow; but the mortal wound was healed. The whole world went after the beast in wondering admiration. Men worshipped the dragon because he had conferred his authority upon the beast; they worshipped the beast also, and chanted, “Who is like the **Beast**? Who can fight against it?”

The beast was allowed to mouth bombast and blasphemy, and was given the right to reign for **forty-two months**. It opened its mouth in blasphemy against God, reviling his name and his heavenly dwelling. It was also allowed to wage war on God's people and to defeat them, and was granted authority over every tribe and people, language and nation. All on earth will worship it, except those whose names the Lamb that was slain keeps in his roll of the living, written there since the world was made...

Then I saw another beast, which came up out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb's, but spoke like a dragon. It wielded all the authority of the

first beast in its presence, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship this first beast, whose mortal wound had been healed...Moreover, it caused everyone, great and small, rich and poor, slave and free, to be **branded with a mark** on his right hand or forehead, and no one was allowed to buy or sell unless he bore this beast's mark, either name or number. (Here is the key; and anyone who has intelligence may work out the number of the beast. The number represents a **man's name**, and the numerical value of its letters is **six hundred and sixty-six**.)

...But here is the clue for those who can interpret it. The seven heads [of the beast] are **seven hills** on which the woman sits. (17:9)

### FOOTNOTES

1. *Isaiah 7.14*: ...the Lord himself shall give you a sign: A young woman is with child, and she will bear a son...  
*Psalms 2.9*: You shall break them with a rod of iron...
2. *or* the word of God to which they bore witness

Translation and notes from the New English Bible