

Mary Crowned with Glory (Revelation 12)

The Woman and the Dragon. ¹A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. ²She was with child and wailed aloud in pain as she labored to give birth. ³Then another sign appeared in the sky; it was a huge red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on its heads were seven diadems. ⁴Its tail swept away a third of the stars in the sky and hurled them down to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman about to give birth, to devour her child when she gave birth. ⁵She gave birth to a son, a male child, destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod. Her child was caught up to God and his throne. ⁶The woman herself fled into the desert where she had a place prepared by God, that there she might be taken care of for twelve hundred and sixty days.

⁷Then war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels battled against the dragon. The dragon and its angels fought back, ⁸but they did not prevail and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹The huge dragon, the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, who deceived the whole world, was thrown down to earth, and its angels were thrown down with it.

¹⁰Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:

“Now have salvation and power come, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Anointed.

For the accuser of our brothers is cast out, who accuses them before our God day and night. ¹¹They conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; love for life did not deter them from death.

¹²Therefore, rejoice, you heavens, and you who dwell in them. But woe to you, earth and sea, for the Devil has come down to you in great fury, for he knows he has but a short time.”

¹³When the dragon saw that it had been thrown down to the earth, it pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. ¹⁴But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle, so that she could fly to her place in the desert, where, far from the serpent, she was taken care of for a year, two years, and a half-year. ¹⁵The serpent, however, spewed a torrent of water out of his mouth after the woman to sweep her away with the current. ¹⁶But the earth helped the woman and opened its mouth and swallowed the flood that the dragon spewed out of its mouth.

¹⁷Then the dragon became angry with the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring, those who keep God’s commandments and bear witness to Jesus.

C. Take a Deeper Look

Answering the following questions will help you understand why the woman in Revelation 12 should be understood at least in part as being associated with Mary and what this passage reveals about her unique role in salvation history.

The Woman and Her Child (Revelation 12:1-5)

1. Read verses 1-4 again and describe the “portents” or “signs” John sees in heaven.

2. Who is this woman? One key to understanding this is to consider the identity of the child to whom she gives birth.

a. What does verse 5 tell us about the woman's child?

A sign in the Bible is “an act, event, or object that points beyond itself to something else, often a greater or unseen reality. Signs can serve to impart a message or key image, to give a reminder or memorial, to give an omen or portent, or to display the loving and powerful work of God.” (Catholic Bible Dictionary, Scott Hahn, General Editor)

b. Read Psalm 2:9, a prophetic text about the LORD's anointed King, the Messiah. What does this verse tell us about the future Messiah?

c. In light of this background, who do you think the child is?

3. If this is true about the child, then who might the woman who gives birth to him be?

The Woman and the Dragon (Revelation 12:5-12)

4. Let us now consider how this woman is depicted here as the new Eve.

a. Review Genesis 3:15. What does God say will happen between the woman described there and the serpent (a symbol for the devil)?

b. Now read Revelation 12:5-9. What happens to the dragon when the woman's male child is born?

c. According to Revelation 12:9, who is the dragon?

d. If the dragon in Revelation 12 is the serpent of Genesis 3:15 at the moment of his defeat, who would the "woman" be in light of this Genesis 3:15 background?

The Woman and Her Other Offspring (Revelation 12:13-17)

5. Read Revelation 12:17.

a. According to this verse, the woman has other offspring. How are these other offspring described?

b. In the vision in this verse, who are the "other offspring" on earth?

c. Considering that the woman represents Mary, what does that suggest about Mary's relationship with us? Read also CCC 501.

CCC 501 Jesus is Mary's only son, but her spiritual motherhood extends to all men whom indeed he came to save: "The Son whom she brought forth is he whom God placed as the first-born among many brethren, that is, the faithful in whose generation and formation she co-operates with a mother's love."

The Crown of Twelve Stars

6. According to Revelation 12:1, the woman is depicted as having a crown of twelve stars on her head. Read 2 Timothy 4:7-8, in which another heavenly crown is described.

a. Because of what qualities does Paul say he and others will receive "the crown of righteousness" in heaven?

b. What would this tell us about Mary, who wears a crown in Revelation 12:1?

7. Read the following passages, noting how Mary is depicted in the Bible as a persevering, faithful disciple throughout her life—and thus someone worthy of "the crown of righteousness."

Luke 1:38:

Luke 1:39:

Luke 1:45:

Luke 2:19

Luke 2:51:

John 19:25-27:

Acts 1:14:

8. What aspects of Mary's example of faith from the verses above inspire you the most in your own faith to pursue the crown of righteousness that awaits all Christians?

"For the Mother of Christ is glorified as 'Queen of the Universe.'³ She who at the Annunciation called herself the 'handmaid of the Lord' remained throughout her earthly life faithful to what this name expresses. In this she confirmed that she was a true 'disciple' of Christ, who strongly emphasized that his mission was one of service: the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many' (Matthew 20:28). In this way Mary became the first of those who, 'serving Christ also in others, with humility and patience lead their brothers and sisters to that King whom to serve is to reign,⁴ and she fully obtained that state of royal freedom' proper to Christ's disciples: to serve means to reign!"

- Redemptoris Mater 41

3 Second Vatican Council, Lumen Gentium ("Dogmatic Constitution on the Church") 59.

4 Ibid 36.

D. Application

Reflect At the end of this study, let us remember Jesus' last words about Mary in the Bible: "Behold, your mother" (John 19:27). We saw how he speaks those words to the Beloved Disciple just before he dies, entrusting him into a special relationship with Mary as his mother. But we also saw how the Beloved Disciple represents all faithful disciples of the Lord and how all Christians are given Mary as their spiritual mother. –

Prayerfully ponder this scene and imagine that you are the Beloved Disciple standing next to Mary under the cross of Christ. Picture Jesus speaking these words now specifically to you, "Behold, your mother." Jesus is giving you Mary, his own mother, as your spiritual mother. What would you say to Jesus in response to this great gift? What would you say to Mary?

Commit

What can you do now to welcome Mary more into your daily life and develop a more intimate relationship with her, knowing that she, in her maternal love for you, constantly looks out for your needs and ardently prays for them to her son, Jesus? Decide to do something this week, and write it here along with when you plan to do it.

Pray Spend a few moments thanking Mary for her maternal care. Pray the Hail Mary slowly and carefully, paying attention to the words in light of all you have learned in this study.