

## *Session 5: The Woman and the Dragon*

### *Questions to begin*

- The woman in the reading bears a Son who fulfils prophetic expectations. Reflecting on your parents' expectations for you, how might they think about what you have done with your life so far?
- Describe a situation in which you were a witness to Jesus at work or with friends.

### **The Reading: Rev 12:1-18**

12 A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. <sup>2</sup>She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pangs, in the agony of giving birth. <sup>3</sup>Then another portent appeared in heaven: a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. <sup>4</sup>His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, so that he might devour her child as soon as it was born. <sup>5</sup>and she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron. But her child was snatched away and taken to God and to his throne; <sup>6</sup>and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, so that there she can be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

7 and war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, <sup>8</sup>but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. <sup>9</sup>The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, proclaiming,  
     'Now have come the salvation and the power  
         and the kingdom of our God  
         and the authority of his Messiah,  
 for the accuser of our comrades has been thrown down,  
     who accuses them day and night before our God.  
<sup>11</sup> But they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb

and by the word of their testimony,  
 for they did not cling to life even in the face of death.  
<sup>12</sup> Rejoice then, you heavens  
 and those who dwell in them!  
 But woe to the earth and the sea,  
 for the devil has come down to you  
 with great wrath,  
 because he knows that his time is short!’

13 So when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. <sup>14</sup>But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle, so that she could fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to her place where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. <sup>15</sup>Then from his mouth the serpent poured water like a river after the woman, to sweep her away with the flood. <sup>16</sup>But the earth came to the help of the woman; it opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. <sup>17</sup>Then the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her children, those who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus.

18 Then the dragon took his stand on the sand of the seashore.

*After reading the text, you may wish to consider the following:*

- On the basis of the description of the dragon’s activities in vv.9-10, what sort of things does the water coming from the dragon’s mouth (v.15) probably symbolise?
- Verse 17 says the dragon goes off “to make war” on the woman’s other children. Judging from the description of the dragon (vv.9-10), what kind of demonic activity does this war probably symbolise?
- After looking back at 3:21 and 5:6-7, who would you say the child in v.5 is? Who, then, might the woman’s other children be (v.17)? What relationship do they have with the child in v.5?
- Sometimes the heavenly voice that John hears is the voice of God or the Lamb. Is this the case in vv.10-12?
- What words would you use to describe the characteristics of Christians in vv.11 and 17?

**After session 5, you may wish to consider the following**

*Questions for Application*

- John introduces images of the devil, but only in the context of new images of Jesus' death, resurrection and authority. What might be the significance of this context?
- Christians who took part in emperor worship were joining in something socially acceptable but not in keeping with their faith in Jesus Christ. How can we become aware of our own blind spots to attitudes and behaviour that are socially accepted but are contrary to our call to discipleship?
- When have you realised that you needed to make a break with some widely accepted practice or value out of faithfulness to your following of Jesus Christ?
- "Testimony" to Jesus is mentioned twice in Rev 12. In what way do you bear witness to Jesus? How might God be calling you to do this more or differently?

*Suggestions for Prayer*

The reading portrays the devil as a deceiver seeking to destroy the Church through falsehood (12:15). Take a few moments to reflect on the following: What is an area of life where you experience temptation? Who are the tempters and deceivers in your life? How do you intend to confront them?

Pray a Hail Mary and an Our Father.