

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Spiritual Battle

Revelation 12:7-17

INTRODUCTION:

In the first eleven chapters we got some glimpses of events that are going on behind the scenes. But until now, it has not been spelled out for us as to why the world has so much animosity against the church. But that all changes here.

The remainder of chapter 12 will show us the spiritual battle that lies behind the conflict that the church faces.

What I hope we accomplish here this morning is that our understanding of our adversary will cause us NOT to live in ignorance, but rather that we take what we know of him and the advantages he has over us and use it to our advantage by turning it against him.

What I would like to do is walk through this vision and identify these symbols to point out who, or what, or even when, these elements are actually referring to. Once we have walked through the vision, I would like to reconstruct it, if you will, at the end to give you the understanding that you need in order that you can engage in the battle that we are in with courage and encouragement. **That is the plan.**

Let us give honor and attention to God's word as we stand and read from Revelation, chapter 12.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Revelation 12:7-17 (NASB)

The Angel, Michael

⁷ And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, ⁸ and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying,

“Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. ¹¹ And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. ¹² For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great

wrath, knowing that he has *only* a short time.”

¹³ And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *child*. ¹⁴ But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she *was* nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. ¹⁵ And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. ¹⁶ But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. ¹⁷ So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

Prayer

BODY:

I. THE WAR IN HEAVEN.

Revelation 12:7-9 (NASB)

⁷ And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, ⁸ and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. ⁹ 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.

We are told in verse 7 that war arose in heaven. Verse 8 points back to some cosmic battle that took place sometime between the creation and the fall. There was a rebellion that took place, but that is not what this has to do with. Because as we are beginning to see the entire scope of the cosmic conflict in verse 12 revolves around the Child. This chapter highlights the conflict leading up to His birth, the conflict at His birth, and the conflict that comes after His birth. So, this is the focus, it is Satan's battle against the Child and against His people. As verse 13 tells us what Satan did when he was defeated and was kicked out of heaven and thrown down to the earth. We are told that he pursued the woman who **HAD** given birth to the child. This is after the ascension. This is after He was born; this was after He ascended; it was after the defeat in heaven when he was thrown down to the earth. So he got thrown down and this is what happened. The entire point is to show the saving work of Jesus Christ against these spiritual forces that are assaulting the people of God. As we are going to see, this is what it is wanting to show. It wants to show the impact. It wants to tell us in advance, the outcome. An outcome that was already completed at Calvary.

That war was fought on earth. It was fought at the cross when Jesus suffered and died on the cross outside Jerusalem and then rose from the dead. He is saying that that was the death blow. And now we are just seeing the ramifications of it. Jesus ascends into heaven and Pffew! Down with Satan. Down with you!

Verse 8 and 9 reveals what was happening in heaven when the earthly events that are recorded in verses 1-6 was taking place. As it was Christ's work here on earth that resulted in Satan's defeat there and him thus being cast down out of heaven.

This is good news and it is also interesting. Because one of the things that we notice in the Bible is that prior to this time Satan had access to the throne of God. We are familiar with the book of Job. In the book of Job, Satan appeared as one of the sons of God. Satan started accusing and pointing out Job. Saying "Yeah, that guy praises you, but that is because You bless him with good things, but as soon as you bring hardship into this man's life, he will ditch you and cast away his faith. You remember the story, Satan is there accusing Job before God. He is just here for the goods.

We see these events in the Old Testament. Satan was in the presence of God, but no more! NO MORE! He has been cast down. The accuser of the saints has been cast down because now that Christ's work has been completed on the cross, he can bring no accusation against us. NONE! **He...has...been...cast...down!** This is beautiful and glorious news. That is why this loud voice in heaven breaks out in praise to God in verses 10-12.

II. JOY IN HEAVEN.

Revelation 12:10-12a (NASB)

¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying,

"Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. ¹¹ And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. ¹² For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them.

Christ has now been exalted to this place. All authority has been given to Christ. And there is rejoicing in this. Why? Because the accuser of the saints has been thrown down who accuses them day and night before our God no more. Now that Christ has come and paid the price there is no more accusation that can be levied. No more! It shows the completeness of our salvation.

Christ has taken our sin and made us righteous. There is Now that Christ has come down and paid the price, there is nothing left for Satan to accuse us with.

This victory over Satan has been won by Christ at the cross. Paul said it well in the letter to the Colossians.

Colossians 2:13-15 (NASB)

¹³ When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, ¹⁴ having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵ When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

The language that is used here is actually the language that was used of a conquering army and what they would do to those they had just conquered. They would strip them down naked and, in absolute humiliation, march them through the city's capital for everyone to see. It was a show of absolute power to completely humiliate them. That is what Christ did to Satan at the cross. He stripped him down and absolutely humiliated him. "He made a public display" of Satan and his followers and heaven rejoices in it

because the "dragon" is now banished from their presence for good.

But as we see in the rest of verse 12, what heaven rejoices in is the very thing that inflicts woe on earth. As this loud voice goes on to say...

III. SPIRITUAL PROTECTION FROM SATAN.

Revelation 12:12b-13 (NASB)

Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has *only* a short time." ¹³ And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *child*.

Have any of you played competitive sports? What happens when you suffer a humiliating defeat? It is typically one of two things. Either you just get crushed and you put your tail between your two legs and give up. Or the other, you are just furious! Satan is the latter. His tail is not between his legs. He has come down to the earth in great wrath. He is enraged because he knows that the battle has already been decided. He knows the outcome of the war has already been determined at the cross.

There are so many ways to look at the cross. But one of the ways is to see Jesus as victor over Satan. It is beautiful to consider that, by that one event, Satan's head has been crushed. He knows his time is short. He knows that he will be banished to the abyss where he will suffer for eternity.

So now, as we see in verse 13, knowing that he has lost the battle, knowing that he has been cast down from heaven, knowing that his time is short, and knowing that his torment is to come, knowing all of that, he pursues the woman who has given birth to the male child.

The word "pursue" is the same word that is used for "persecuted". He is not pursuing us because he wants to congratulate us. *You know like after a good game, you slap hands with the opposing team and say "Good game. Good game. Good game"?* No Satan is pursuing in order to persecute. He is enraged and he is going after this woman.

At this point is important to note that the woman's identity shifts. Where we were once talking about Israel or at Jesus birth, Mary, the mother of Jesus. We are now talking about the church. This is something that we see throughout the Bible...

That the people of God, the woman, are identified under the old covenant as Israel and they are identified under the new covenant as the church. This is how the people of God are identified. These are the labels upon the people of God. Israel, church, either one are the people of God, both are the "woman" depending on the period of time being referred to. And thus there is a unity of the people of God throughout. What tied us together regardless of the covenant that you lived under was that we believed in the one true God and in the salvation that was to come through Him.

Here in verse 12, we see this seamless transition. As we see the woman who was pursued prior to the birth of Christ was clearly Israel, but now after the ascension, and Satan's expulsion from heaven, the woman is clearly the church. If it does not seem clear, all you have to do is look at verse 17 where in the summary statement we are told...

Revelation 12:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, (Who are they? Those) who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

Who holds to the testimony of Jesus, Israel or the church? **The church!**

We see it all throughout the entire Bible. There are one people of God shown through two identities and under two different covenants, but they are one people. The people of God. Israel under the old covenant and the church under the new covenant.

So after Jesus' ascension into heaven, Satan is now pursuing those who believe in Jesus. But fortunately as we go on we see that the woman, the church, would not be left to fend for itself against this very monstrous foe.

Revelation 12:14 (NASB)

¹⁴ But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she *was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.

This reference to the two wings of the great eagle is directly referring to Exodus 19:4.

Exodus 19:4 (NASB)

⁴ You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself.

Israel, in their exodus, was said to be carried by God on His wings as they fled from this dragon like creature, Pharaoh. Both are fleeing into the wilderness. Israel into the wilderness and the church into the wilderness. Both are fleeing from a dragon. Pharaoh the dragon and Satan the dragon. Both are fleeing into the wilderness where God would carry us and nourish us and nurture us. That is the very thing that He is doing for the church now.

We are told in the text, that He will do this "**for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent**". Times = 2. Time = 1. 1/2 a Time = 1/2. This is the three and a half years, 42 months, or 1260 days that we read of in chapter 11 and in verse 6 of this chapter. This is the entire period of time between the ascension and the second coming of Christ. What this is telling us is that God will care for us during this entire period of time. The reference to the exodus is showing us what our experience will be like. Our experience is likened to a life in the wilderness. It is spoken to us in this way to show us that this period of time is like what John told us in chapter 1. It is period of the tribulation. There is no period of time from Christ's ascension until He comes again that can be described as other than tribulation.

For people who still think that this is some off in the distance future event, I would suggest that they talk to the Christians in Korea and tell them that. Tell them "Oh, there is a great tribulation that is coming upon the earth". If they only mention the name Jesus, they are done for. Same is true in the Islamic world. Since we live here where we are not violently persecuted for our faith, we shall all of this stuff about a great future

tribulation which just isn't the case. There will be an intensification as we have seen with the seals and the trumpets and as we will see in the bowls. But it is not a whole other seven year event. I think we are already seeing evidence of that intensification.

Revelation 1:9a (NASB)

⁹I, John, your brother and **fellow partaker** in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance *which are in Jesus...*

This is the age that the church lives in. It is a period of tribulation with trials and hardships. John doesn't say that we are carried on eagle's wings to this beautiful lush garden and you can comfortably watch the unbelievers as they suffer with all kinds of torment. No! It is a wilderness. Why? Because the 1260 days are a hard time. It is a place where we will be protected from the dragon just as the Israelites were protected from the reach of Pharaoh. All along God is guiding us just as He was Israel towards a promised destiny.

The whole time that the Israelites were in the wilderness, they weren't just going nowhere. God took them in circles for a little while because they kept grumbling and complaining, so He prolonged their time. But He was always taking them somewhere. He had made a promise to them and He did not break His promise, but He kept His promise. They would continue to rebel and blow it and rebel and blow it, again and again and again. He keeps His promise to us as well. You see, we are wandering in the wilderness, but we are going somewhere. He is taking us to that land that He has promised us.

So Satan persecutes the woman. He does not have just one method of persecuting.

Revelation 12:15 (NASB)

¹⁵And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood.

What does that refer to? Well, in Revelation, what proceeds from the mouth are words and their power. In Revelation 19 we have the image of Christ and His coming on a white horse and we are told that a sharp sword proceeds from His mouth and slays His enemies. As we have said, Christ does not have a large metal blade coming out of His mouth that He uses to chop people's heads off. This is speaking of the power of His word to slay those who oppose Him.

The same thing is being said here of Satan. The flood waters flowing from the mouth of the serpent symbolizes the enormous and powerful false teaching and deception that gushes out from him.

This is something that we see all around us. He is called the deceiver of the entire world. That is why the heavens were so excited that he was cast out. He is full of deception and lies. This is another scheme he uses against the church. He tries to drown the church in a sea of deception and false teaching.

Revelation 12:16-17 (NASB)

¹⁶But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. ¹⁷So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

You may ask, How does the **earth** help the woman? Well, this is referring back, once again, to Moses and the Israelites. If you remember, when pharaoh tried to cross the Red Sea, God caused the sea to collapse upon them and kill them. God protected them. This is, in essence what He is doing for the church today. He is spiritually protecting us with the aid of the Holy Spirit in our lives and His word. He does not allow Satan's deception to catch us unaware. This enrages Satan and he continues to persecute the church.

CONCLUSION:

So for now, we live in this time of tension. It is an in between time. It is between the already and not yet. We have already been delivered from sin and experience many blessings, but we have not yet experienced the consummation of it all where we experience all of the fullness of the blessing. That is only to be experienced in heaven. That is the reality. So, for now Satan pursues the church to persecute her. And yet the church is placed beyond the reach of Satan as we have seen in the sealing of the 144,000 and the measuring of the temple. Bodies may be killed, but we are kept spiritually secure from Satan and thus are assured of inheriting the land God has promised us.

How do we take what we know of Satan and the advantages he has over us and use it to our advantage by turning it against him. By letting the scriptures become alive in our life. Internalize the scriptures and let them control your life. Then you will be prepared to recognize and avoid Satan's deceptions. You will know that any persecution you have to face will only result for good for those that love the Lord!

This is the Day!