

Lesson # 39 Satan Cast Down

Revelation 12: 7-12

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Revelation 12:7-12 (ESV)

⁷Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, ⁸but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹And 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. ¹⁰And 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 brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. ¹¹And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. ¹²Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"

I. War in Heaven

vv. 7-8

What would war in heaven look like? We can't imagine it because it goes against everything we think we know about heaven. Yet, remember, the first sin was not committed in Eden, but in heaven by Lucifer, and a third of the heavenly host ^① decided to side with him rather than with God. Some of these angels were so evil that they were almost immediately incarcerated by God in a place called "the Abyss" where they have been ever since (**2 Pet. 2:4** – Gr. "*tartarus*" & cf. **Jude 6**). Some speculate that these demons locked up so early in history were ones who attempted to procreate with human women in order to create a new race (**Gen. 6:1-4** – if that is what Genesis 6:1-4 is describing). Do you recall the pleas from the demons to Christ in Matt. 8:29 ? – "do not torment us before the time". They knew there was a set time, and that some of their group had already been placed into that particular, temporary hell before the set time for all of them.

Strange as it may seem, and we mentioned it in our last lesson, Satan and perhaps some of his minions have been allowed access into heaven throughout history, but this access is about to end forever, and so a furious, cornered Satan – see Rev. 12:12 – makes a desperate attempt to dethrone God before that time is up. There have been spirit world battles and skirmishes since the fall of Lucifer – cf. **Dan. 10:12-13; Eph. 6:11-13 & Jude 9** – but until this point, those battles seem to have taken place in a dimension unseen by humans on earth or above it. But now we are told that this battle takes place in heaven.

When does this occur? Some see this as something that took place in concert with v. 4 – "when Satan fell" – but the consequences listed in vv. 10-12 make this position pretty weak. It cannot be at the time of John's writing of the book because there is no evidence that Satan pursued Christ to heaven when He

ascended to heaven and Jesus' prayer in **JN 17:15** makes it unlikely that Satan's interest after Christ's ascension was in any way dissuaded from attacking Christ's followers – cf. Rev. 12: 10b; I Pet. 5:8; Rev. 2:10,13. Yet another view places this battle at some past time which has resulted in spiritual skirmishes and John's concern over Satan's rage is somewhat supportive of that, but this narrative with the involvement of Michael and his angels, plus the connection with the context of the 1,260 days of v. 6 makes this unlikely as well.

Yet others take the statements, like the one of Jesus in JN 12:31 – “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out”, to refer to the fact that the battle took place at the Cross, but there have been more than 1,260 days pass since then. Ultimately, Christ's victory at the Cross is the event that defeated Satan, but apparently, God was not yet done with Satan at the Cross, and has allowed him to remain actively in opposition to God & God's people. See I Peter 5:8; James 4:7-8, etc.

All of these ideas can be eliminated and we can safely conclude that this war takes place midway through the Tribulation, leaving 3 ½ years for Satan to wield a reign of terror on the earth as he seeks to kill Israel and God's elect because he is no longer allowed access to heaven. The unusual persecution and many of the demon saturated judgments to follow are proof of Satan's desperation and rage as he realizes that his time is coming to a swift close.

The main leader of the holy angels is Michael, not Christ as some depict, and Michael is not Christ either as the Jehovah's Witnesses would have us believe. His special realm seems to be associated with overseeing and protecting Jewish interests (Dan. 10:13,21; 12:1; Jude 9) and as such, his role among the holy angels seems to coincide with Satan's role (the dragon) with his demonic followers. ②

The battle ends (v. 8) and Satan is defeated decisively, and he and his demons are barred from heaven forever. (note **Rev. 20:10; 21:4,8,27**) There will never again be war in heaven after this one. The next Satanically inspired war takes place on earth at the end of the Millennium – Rev. 19:9-20:3 – and then, very interestingly, in order to lead that battle, Satan will be released from his holding cell “when the 1,000 years are ended” (20:7) and will stir up yet 1 more rebellion against Jerusalem but this time, no battle takes place – see **Rev. 20:7-10** – because fire from heaven simply consumes the army of Satan. God allowed war to take place in heaven for some purpose He has not disclosed to us, but by the end of the Millennial Kingdom, when the threat of war looms, God simply flicks the problem away with a word. Ponder that. Why? Why once the Kingdom has come and lasted for 1,000 years, would God allow the release of Satan at all? I believe that only from a dispensational viewpoint can we arrive at a satisfactory conclusion to that question. God has a purpose for it. He is proving once for all that man is depraved and a rebel against God if God has not done a work in his / her heart, even when Satan has been out of the picture, and the non-elect will follow him when he is released even after 1,000 years of righteous rule of Jesus on earth.

II. Satan Thrown Down to Earth vv. 9-10

Satan & his angels are forcefully expelled from heaven – access denied – and notice in v. 9, “...were thrown down”, and this is repeated to show the force and importance of this event. He will abide on earth for 3 ½ more years, then will be locked alive in the Abyss for another 1,000 years, will have one final brief hurrah against God, then will finally be confined for eternity in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10), where he will not be the king of the hill or the master of Hell, as popular thought depicts him, with horns, a tail & a pitchfork, but just its’ most celebrated inhabitant. Satan will have no authority in Hell.

Verse 9 makes it very clear who this person is, not allowing room for any error whatsoever in identifying him. Five descriptors are used;

- He is “the great dragon”
- He is “that ancient serpent”
- He is “the devil”
- He is “Satan”
- He is “the deceiver of the whole world”

By comparing Scripture to Scripture, there can be no way to miss the point that this one who has killed, deceived, lied to, accused and falsely accused the saints of all ages, whose goal has always been to usurp God’s authority and molest His loved ones, has now been placed in a position of humility which enrages his pride, and God will use that rage to bring about His own purposes and to walk Satan ③ into the trap being laid for him on earth.

His angels are thrown down with him, their access to heaven also revoked. They too will be unwittingly used of God to accomplish what He has decreed for them during the final 3 ½ years of history as we know it. What is approaching for these demons and for Satan is what James speaks of in James 2:19b, “...even the demons believe and tremble.”

Upon this victory by Michael and his army of holy angels (v. 10), another outburst of praise erupts in heaven as one more step in the arrival of God’s Kingdom on earth has been taken, and Satan and his cohorts are no longer allowed to accuse the brethren in heaven. The loud voice speaking is not Christ this time, and not an angel, because he calls Satan “the accuser of our brothers”, which is something Christ might say (except He would say “MY brothers”), and no angel could say. This must be the voice of a believer in heaven or the unified voice of many believers in heaven.

Note what the praise is in **vv. 10-12** – it is 3 things. This praise also helps us date the war & victory – “have come” refers to a very recent event, in fact in the tense of the Greek, it has the force of “has just now come”, so this is an end time picture for sure. The voice says that salvation or victory, the power and the kingdom all belong to our God.

The authority of Christ is also praised – His authority will be more clearly seen in the Kingdom where He will reign visibly for 1,000 years from David’s throne – cf. Ps. 2:8 – and this is now only 3 ½ years away at this point, but is praised as if it were already here. Some amillennialists claim that we have been in this Kingdom since Christ’s ascension, but that would make the next line of praise in our text ridiculous, telling us that Satan’s accusing work has been done since about AD 30! The Kingdom has not yet physically arrived at this point in Revelation, because Satan still has a role to play as v. 12 tells us. This praise is prophetic rather than historic. It is so certain now with this last victory that it is inconceivable that it will never arrive.

This verse is the only time in the NT that Satan is called “the accuser” and this role has now ended because he has been thrown down to earth, so now his only recourse is to intensify his role as persecutor of God’s people.

III. The Blood of the Lamb

v. 11

The praise now turns to those on earth who have and who will yet overcome Satan in a particular way – by the blood of the Lamb; by the word of their testimony; because they loved not their lives even unto death = perseverance in the face of deadly persecution. God has not dumped Satan out of heaven on His children, leaving them unable to defend against him.

Even though Satan has been confined to earth, has deceived, inspired evil and empowered 2 evil people to run the world from the highest possible government positions in history, God’s people will overcome their efforts. They will remain faithful in life against incredible odds – cf. **Rev. 13:8** – or will faithfully die for the cause of Christ – **Rev. 13:9-10**. Either way, Satan loses because death has lost its’ sting for God’s people – cf. **Romans 8: 31-39**. Not only did the angelic host defeat Satan and his army, but God’s human people do as well. If even death has no power, how can Satan ever hope to win? ④

Where does the strength come from to overcome in the face of such intense pressure to knuckle under to the Antichrist & False Prophet? How do they do it? How do we do it? How do any believers at any time in history remain faithful when being unfaithful would be so easy and temporally satisfying, and could help them escape torment & death? Our text supplies the answer.

First, the praise of those praising now turns to “our brothers” (v. 10), those whom Satan was accusing and who are in even more danger. Yet, “they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb”. They have endured the accusations by him in heaven because they have a High Priest who makes intercession for His own; and they will overcome his direct onslaught throughout the rest of the Tribulation by the power of Jesus’ blood which cleanses from all sin. Some will survive the Tribulation – certainly the 144,000 for sure, along with many millions more – and will enter the Millennial Kingdom as live humans, in an unglorified state. Others will be (& some had been already) martyred, faithful

to the death. Once again, this praise is partly proleptic – a certainty not yet realized in real time but something that cannot fail to happen.

Remember the letters to the 7 churches in Rev. 2 & 3? In each letter, Jesus promises the recipients (who represent those churches) a blessing based on, “To the one who conquers (ESV) (overcomes – KJV) I will...and then the various promises follow.ⁱ “To eat of the tree of life in God’s paradise” (Ephesus); “to not be hurt by the second death” (Smyrna) & “to receive hidden manna, a white stone and a new name” (Pergamum); “to have authority over the nations & to have the morning star” (Thyatira); “to be clothed in white garments, to never have their names blotted out, and to have Jesus confess their names before the Father & the angels” (Sardis); “to be a pillar in the temple of God, and to have the name of the city of God and the name of Christ” (Philadelphia); and to sit on Christ’s throne” (Laodicea).

Those who conquer here will be doing so under the most extreme persecution conditions imaginable, which due to its’ worldwide scope will eclipse the WW II Holocaust, the various other historic genocides in Cambodia, Russia, China, Burma, Darfur, Rhodesia, Somalia, etc. The danger and temptation of such a time is that those who will witness the horror of what will be happening to their saved brethren will assume that they may be next, and will know that they can recant their testimony and spare their lives or stay faithful and suffer the same physical horrific fate as the others. The fact that there is a way out makes this a much more difficult time of testing for the Christian faith because those in the Holocaust or virtually all other historic genocides had no way out. ⑤

C.S. Lewis, in a book that should be read by every believer – *A Grief Observed* – makes this profound statement related to our beliefs:

“You never know how much you really believe anything until its’ truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life & death to you.”ⁱⁱ

Our ‘faith’ is often tripped up by something far less important than what will face Tribulation era believers. Our North American brand of Christianity Lite or McChristianity is not preparing us to undergo deadly persecution, at least not yet. What does it take for us to stop evangelizing and living for Christ? If someone calls us a bigot, or a fool, or a hate-monger – that’s usually enough. But those whom this voice is lifting in praise overcame by the blood of the Lamb, some to the death, trusting in the complete efficacy of what Christ did for them on the cross. The faithful take to heart and apply what Paul says in **Phil. 2:5-11**, and **Gal. 2:20**.

Consider that in places where the most severe persecution takes place, the true church grows against all human odds. Yet, here in North America, the church that grows is the false church, the liberal church, the health & wealth church, the entertaining church and the social gospel church! God help us!

This faith leads them to conquer by the word of their testimony and because they loved not their lives unto death. This alludes back to some things Jesus said in

Luke 14:25-33; JN 12:25-26; 16:33 and cf. Paul in Rom. 16:20. By living according to standards like these, even the loss of a believer's life is a victory over Satan because it brings us into the presence of the One we worship though we cannot yet see Him. Are we counting on the blood of Jesus for our victory over the world? Is our testimony that tightly knit to Christ? Is Gal. 2:20 our testimony? Or how about Paul in Acts 20:24 or Phil. 1:20-21 or in his farewell address in II Tim. 4:6-8? That is real faith and that is what the Tribulation saints and martyrs possess. Do we possess such faith!

IV. Satan's Time is Short

v. 12

The Bible is a record of theological & redemptively historical information that gives us what we know about God and Christ for sure, but woven throughout the fabric of grace, mercy and forgiveness is a battle that begins in heaven and spills over into the earthly realms & provides us with the context for our personal understanding of how evil in our lives and all around us has any place in God's creation. At the forefront of that battle between good and evil is the presence & instigation of that being known alternately as Lucifer, Satan, the Dragon, etc. His hatred of God and thus, his hatred of God's people and his varied attempts to deceive God's people, thus (in his mind) making God look bad have centered around attacks against Christians in the NT era, but go back to & include the present and future intensive evil intentions against Israel.

Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum presents a couple of excellent paragraphs in a book – ⑥ “Jews and the Gospel at the End of History” that I felt were appropriate to share at this time, because I think he has summarized the issue at hand very well.

“This study [his chapter in this book – “The Basis of the Second Coming of the Messiah”] is relevant to Jewish evangelism in three important ways. First, it helps to understand the biblical foundation of anti-Semitism, and why Satan has had this long unending war against the Jews so as to destroy them at every opportunity. Satan knows that once the second coming occurs his career is over, but he also knows there will be no second coming apart from the Jewish request for it to happen. So if he can succeed in destroying the Jews once and for all, before they have a chance to plead for the Messiah to return, then there will be no second coming, and Satan's career will be safe forever.

This is the reason Satan has waged a perpetual war against the Jews throughout history, from the time of Abraham to the present. This is why the Crusades occurred, and the Russian pogroms, and the Nazi holocaust. And this is why today it is the declared goal of Islam masses to annihilate Israel. Knowing his time is short, Satan expends all his energies to try to destroy the Jews once and for all. Anti-Semitism in any form, active or passive, be it racial, ethnic, national, economic, political, religious, or theological, is all part of the satanic strategy to avoid the second coming.

Second, this study helps to explain why Satan has used one name more than any other name to persecute Jews. Since the fourth century, more

than 90% of all persecutions against the Jews have been done in the name of Christ. Satan knows the one name they need to call upon for national salvation and the second coming, so he mapped out a strategy to make that name odious in the Jewish community, and indeed, it has become odious. The vast majority of Jewish reaction to Jesus today is not based upon a knowledge of the Yeshua of the NT, but based upon the Jesus of Jewish and church history, which is not the biblical Jesus at all.”ⁱⁱⁱ

This 2 part verse (v. 12) first calls on the current inhabitants of heaven to rejoice – that being the angels who just won the war, as well as the spirits of the dead or raptured believers already there (which would include us one way or the other). Satan will no longer appear in heaven to accuse our brethren so any who might tremble at his presence even in the safety of heaven can now be relieved – the Kingdom is on the verge of coming about. This exultation is reflected in verses like **Isa. 49:13** & **Ps. 96:11-13**.^{iv}

Then, the 2nd part of the verse warns the people on earth and sea that the devil has been thrown down to earth in great wrath. This is not yet the 3rd woe – for that, we await the 7 bowl judgments in 16:1ff. This message of woe is rather a warning to believers that he is now on a panic-stricken rampage among them because he realizes that it is all coming to a swift end for him. He had a relatively free reign for centuries to wreak havoc on earth, but now the end is in sight and he has read the Bible and knows how it ends, but he must strive anyway – he will not give up. He may even begin to believe his own lies and believe that he has a shot at defeating God! This will be his final outburst against God’s people that will afford him any success. His next act upon coming to earth is to enthrone the Antichrist in world power as described in chapter 13. The connection between 12:17 and 13:1-2 is unmistakable in that regard.

How do we get from world peace (albeit false peace) to massive chaos at the mid point of the Tribulation? This event in chapter 12 inspires Satan to enthrone his ‘man’ so that finally, Satan will be worshipped as he so dearly desires, even if it is forced worship, but it won’t last and it will not include those who love God (the ones he really wants to get at) – the elect – who will resist him every step of the way, even if it kills them, and he’ll be glad to oblige. The Great Tribulation – the last 3 ½ years of the 7 - begins with this event here in chapter 12 from a spirit world perspective and in II Thess. 2:3-12, and with the 2nd seal and all that follows.

Next lesson – Lesson # 40 The Woman Persecuted – Rev. 12: 13-17

ⁱ Rev. 2:7, 11,17,26; 3:5,12,21

ⁱⁱ C.S. Lewis, quoted by Mark R. Talbot in “The Fame of God’s Name”; Sam Storms & Justin Taylor, editors; Crossway, 2010 p. 93 – see footnote # 47

ⁱⁱⁱ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, The Basis of the Second Coming of the Messiah, as chapter 11 in, Jim Congdon (editor), Jews & the Gospel at the End of History, Kregel Books, 2009; pp. 219-220

^{iv} Robert Thomas, Revelation 8-22; pg. 136, quoting Robert Mounce