

Scripture = Revelation 12:1-17

Psalter Selections = 59A; 59B; 18F; 46C

Introduction: Communion rests upon union. We are exploring the absolute necessity of our union with Christ from the revelation in Scripture on the battlefields of our redemption.

1. The battle in heaven of angels who rebelled against their Sovereign ...
 - a. Informs us about the beginning of sin, and
 - b. Warns us about the atrocious, deceitful, and disastrous nature of sin, and
 - c. Presents us with the predestining purposes of God the Father.

2. The battle in Eden of perfect parents in a perfect world who disbelieved and disobeyed their Creator places us all under the tyranny of sin and death.

3. The battle in Palestine of rebellious men, led by Satan, against Jesus Christ reveals God's glorious conquest for His elect and the certain damnation of His enemies.
 - a. This is the "mother of all battles," the most amazing combat of all.
 - b. In this battle, God Himself enters the worst possible environment, a sin-cursed world, in the weakest and humblest position, as a man.
 - c. In this battle, God-incarnate obeys every requirement of the law, bears the sins of His people, satisfies the full wrath of God, and secures righteousness and peace.

4. Revelation 12 expresses the intensity and consequences of the battle in Palestine.
 - a. The woman represents the community of God's people throughout history.
 - 1) She gives birth to God's Son (12:5)
 - 2) She gives birth to God's people (12:17)
 - b. The dragon represents the devil or Satan (12:9)
 - 1) Seven heads portray that he is shrewd and cunning (12:3)
 - 2) Ten horns show his stupendous power (12:3)
 - 3) Seven crowns indicate his authority (12:3)
 - 4) The sweep of his tail illustrates his influence when he rebelled in heaven (12:4)

5. The third battle is directed against God-incarnate, Jesus Christ. We shall consider: (a) The Attack against Christ; (b) The Destruction of Satan, and (c) The Death of Christ.

A. THE ATTACK AGAINST CHRIST

1. Old Testament threats against the promised seed (Rev. 12:2)
 - a. First-born expelled (Cain)
 - b. World purged (Noah)
 - c. Family starved (Joseph)
 - d. Nation enslaved (Moses)
 - e. Tribes driven out (Judges)
 - f. Kingdom lost (David/Absalom; Elijah/Ahab; Daniel/Nebuchadnezzar)

2. In the Old Testament, Christ appeared temporarily and periodically.
 - a. The Lord Jesus Christ had appeared frequently in the Old Testament.
 - b. Every divine manifestation of the angel of the covenant, or appearance of God, like to Moses on the mountain, were references to the second person of the God-head.
 - 1) Angel of the Lord (Abraham, Joshua, Menoah/Gideon)
 - 2) Fire and cloud (Abraham, Sinai/wilderness, Tabernacle)

John 1:18 = No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.
 - c. These were **temporary** manifestations. He gave Satan a sort of moving target. **All of Satan's attempts to stop the coming Son were frustrated.**
 - d. Satan is a good student of the Bible. He just hates everything he reads. Satan realized that when the second person of the God-head takes a human nature, He takes it forever. No longer a moving target but a fixed, limited human confinement.
3. In the New Testament, Christ appeared in a fixed presence by the Incarnation (Rev. 12:5)

John 1:14 = And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.
4. The New Testament records the threats against Christ: the Bethlehem massacre, the wilderness temptation, the demonic activity, the Sanhedrin's rejection, the disciples' abandonment, and the accursed crucifixion.
5. We can only imagine the way Satan went about to oppose God in the flesh. Satan would realize that if he would destroy Christ he would have to get the establishment against Christ. When Satan had those in authority against Christ, they could manipulate the sentiment of the people.
6. The **establishment** was the easiest to turn against Christ. Before long Satan had the Jewish authorities plotting the death of Jesus. Early in Jesus' ministry the leaders watched Him closely so that they might accuse Him. Jesus healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. "Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him" (Mark 3:6).
7. To succeed Satan also had to alienate the disciples. Satan had to get close if he would destroy Christ. Judas was taken by Satan by greed and disappointment (Mark 14:10-11).
8. To strip the disciples away, Satan would have to take their leader, Peter. Peter, while not being the brightest, was unquestionably loyal to Jesus. A direct attack on Peter would fail because Peter would go down fighting for his Lord (Mark 14:47). The attack that would take Peter was ridicule (Mark 14:6-72). Peter was a brave man and truly loved Jesus Christ, but he could not stand ridicule. Satan realized, "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will kill me." There are people who are ready to shed their blood but they cannot stand scorn. Satan got a serving girl to point the finger at Peter and say "You are a Galilean! You are a follower of Jesus Christ!" Peter curled up and died, three times, that awful night.

9. The great point of this battle is that when Satan stripped away the disciples, and got the crowds to shout, "Crucify Him!" and the soldiers drove the deadly spikes through his arms and legs, and appeared to have destroyed Jesus, Satan found that his head was crushed and Christ's heel was merely bruised as Jesus rose triumphant from the grave.

B. THE DESTRUCTION OF SATAN [Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, p. 49]

1. The work of Christ, which is so central in our Christian faith, is essentially a work of destruction that terminates upon the power and work of Satan. This is not a peripheral or incidental feature of redemption. It is an integral aspect of its accomplishment.
2. Jesus' life triggered victory in heaven. His work in the human realm changed the spiritual realm (Rev. 12:7-9)
 - a. Because Christ defeated the dragon, the good angels are able to defeat the evil angels.
 - b. Because Christ carried out His mission, the devil and his demons are forced to flee.
3. The New Testament declares the importance of Christ death in the destruction of Satan.
 - a. **Our Lord Himself**, as He approached Calvary said, *Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out* (John 12:31).
 - b. The same emphasis is in **John's first epistle**, *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil* (1 John 3:8b).
 - c. The **writer to the Hebrews** understood *that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage* (Hebrews 2:14b-15).
 - d. **Paul** also refers to the destruction of Satanic powers by the cross, *Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.* (Colossians 2:15).

C. THE DEATH OF CHRIST [Murray, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 1, p. 36-39]

1. His death is unique
 - a. Its application -- The Holy One bore sin
2 Corinthians 5:21 = For he hath made him to be sin for us, **who knew no sin**;
 that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.
 - b. Its contradiction -- The Eternal experienced death
John 1:4 = In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.
 - c. Its transaction (way) -- The Sovereign laid down His life
John 10:18 = "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."

2. His death is necessary
 - a. Obedience to the Father

Romans 8:3 = For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, **God did** by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,
 - b. Nature of sin

2 Corinthians 5:21 = For he hath **made him to be sin for us**, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.
 - c. Consequences of sin
 - 1) Sin brings guilt. Answer: sacrifice -- POLLUTION of sin

Hebrews 9:26b = but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the **sacrifice** of Himself.
 - 2) Sin evokes wrath. Answer: propitiation -- PUNISHMENT for sin

1 John 2:2 = And He Himself is the **propitiation** for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.
 - 3) Sin causes alienation. Answer: reconciliation -- PARTITION of sin

1 Peter 3:18 = For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might **bring us to God**, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit
 - 4) Sin brings bondage. Answer: redemption -- POWER of sin

Galatians 3:13 = Christ has **redeemed** us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us ...
 - 5) Sin demands death. Answer: resurrection -- PRESENCE of sin

Romans 6:9-10 = knowing that Christ, having been **raised** from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

Conclusion:

1. Satan never gives up. Jonathan Edwards calls Satan, “the greatest block-head who ever lived.” Satan never learns, even though he is possibly the most intelligent creature God ever made. For the most intelligent creature to think that he can out fight the Almighty or out think the All-wise, earns him the title, “The greatest block-head of all times.”
2. In spite of being dealt his most deadly blow, he goes on battling even more furiously. His insane rage only exalts the power and pleasure of the LORD who is pleased to unite Himself with His people. Once again we ponder the indispensable necessity of union with Christ.
3. God is glorified by revealing the indispensable necessity of union with Christ in the battle in Palestine.

Resource: James M. Boice, Editor, *Our Savior God: Studies on Man, Christ, and the Atonement*, Baker Book House, 1980. Addresses presented to the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology, 1977-1979.