

Revelation

*Part Thirty-Three
The War to End All Wars
(Revelation 12:7-12)*

With Study Questions

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And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, ⁸ but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. ⁹ So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. ¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. ¹¹ And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. ¹² Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time” (Revelation 12:7-12).

Introduction

Isn't it amazing how good news can change your day! You can be sitting as you are, with no immediate noticeable change in your condition, and the mere message of good news can change everything. Imagine, this very moment, that you received a note saying you inherited millions, or that a lost loved one was found, or a doctor's report informed you that you're going to be fine.

The very knowledge of such things can have a physical affect upon us. The Psalmist appeals to this phenomenon when he says that his unconfessed sins made his **“bones grow old”** and turned his **“vitality...into the drought of summer”** (Psalm 32:3, 4). What the Psalmist desired, what we should all desire in similar circumstances, is that God would **“restore the joy of [our] salvation”** (Psalm 51:12). Note that he is not praying that God would restore our salvation, but the joy of it.

If we could merely live in the light of the gospel-the light of what has been won for us in Christ-if the note you received was the good news that your greatest enemy of sin and death has been eternally vanquished, it seems like it should change our day!

And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, ⁸ but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. ⁹ So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him (Revelation 12:7-9).

The Eternal War to End All Wars

Our Bibles say a good bit about our engagement in spiritual warfare (2 Corinthians 10:4; Ephesians 6:13-18; 1 Timothy 1:18, etc.), and it would do us well to grasp our roles and weapons in this capacity. But the verses under our consideration this morning speak of a warfare that could be called the mother of all warfares.

World War I was somewhat optimistically billed as the *The War to End All Wars*. Within twenty years that phrase was used sardonically since the aftermath of WWI set the stage for the more devastating WWII. The victory we read of in verses seven through nine is not like WWI. In its own context and category these verses truly highlight a war that will never have to be fought again or won again.

In verse 11 we will see a bit of the nature of this casting out of Satan, but for now let us be immersed in the good news of a victory that has been won on our behalf. And let us know this, the only reason we can be confident of our own spiritual victories is because our greatest enemy has been subdued. What must have happened in order for the words of James to actually have traction in our lives?

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7).

The armies of Israel were emboldened to pursue the Philistines because their champion had been struck down by David, the anointed one.

Do we have any idea what a powerful foe the devil is when we are told that he will “flee” from us? It makes me think of a movie scene where a monster is chasing its victim who, being cornered, finally decides his only option is to fight back. So, this feeble victim turns with his pocketknife and notices that the monster is hesitant, then fearful, the runs away. At first the would-be victim thinks, “I did it!” Then he turns and sees that there was a great giant behind him from whom the monster actually fled.

Verses seven through nine are a bit of a recapitulation or flashback of verse four where the dragon and his demons are thrown to the earth. We need to spend a bit of time here discussing *when* this happened, *what* was accomplished in this casting out and what we should *expect* (and be called to do) as a result.

When Was Satan Cast Out?

When did this happen? When was the devil cast out? It is with (I hope) a charitable, but fervent disposition that we must reject the more popular, current, futurist view that this has not yet happened! The books, novels, and movies you encounter will offer that this is what will take place at the beginning of the future Great Tribulation. Why is this incorrect?

This is wrong because there is nothing in the context which suggests that this will not happen for thousands of years. In fact, the readers have been told, more than once, that these are things will that soon take place (Revelation 1:1, 3). To suggest that this was nowhere on the scope of the experience of the recipients of this letter would make all of this insignificant to the very ones receiving this letter, to those undergoing these difficulties.

This is wrong (that this is yet future) because of the numerous references in the New Testament which give us a timeframe for this casting out. Here are but a few:

Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.”¹⁸ And He said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.¹⁹ Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.²⁰ Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that

the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:17-20).

I chose to read the larger portion of the passage that we might see that the victory of the seventy was secured by the Giant who stood behind them. This we learn from the words, **“I give you authority...”** Also, the greater source of joy should not be in our power over darkness, but God’s deliverance of us out of that very darkness.

Notice again the timeframe of the casting out of the ruler of this world:

Jesus answered, “This voice (the Father’s voice regarding the glory of His name) has come for your sake, not mine. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (John 12:30-32-parenthesis mine).

Again, notice the timeframe of the binding of the **“strong man”** who is Satan:

And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. ²⁸ But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹ Or how can someone enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house (Matthew 12:27-29).

All this to say that the *when* of this event is part of the accomplished work of Christ. On the cross, Jesus...

...wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵ Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it (Colossians 2:14, 15).

What Does the Casting Out of Satan Accomplish?

The when is past, the what, as stated above amounts to a disarming of the devil. Verse nine points out the particular attribute of the devil as one **“who deceives the whole world.”** His power as deceiver has been disarmed. And our lack of willingness to acknowledge that is based upon many things, not the least of which is a lack of understanding of the darkness of human history.

We lament current trends (political, cultural, social, etc.) as if these trends amount to a lost war. It’s like a person having a deadly tumor removed from their body lamenting that they have a slight cough. The enemy has convinced us that even though the world, as promised in Scripture, has been dramatically and positively affected by the Gospel-by the victory of Christ-that the truth and fulfillment of the Great Commission is on a negative trajectory. This is false biblically and historically.

Another part of the *what* folds into our *expectations* and what we are called to do. We read on:

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. ¹¹ And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death (Revelation 12:10, 11).

Expect A Redeemed World

Similar to the end of chapter 11, we have the establishment of the kingdom of God. This is the turning point in history! BC has become AD and, more importantly, we have this kept promise regarding the beauty and redemption of the New Covenant in Christ.

This New Covenant is founded upon **“salvation and strength”** and the **“power of...Christ.”** The ability, as we have seen, of the devil to deceive the nations has been hobbled. It’s as if the earth has been tented for

pests-for the peskiness of sin and death-and the remnant that still remain have days that are numbered.

A Heavenly Court Scene

But beyond that (and at a more personal level), the devil has been cast down as our “**accuser.**” It says he accuses the brethren, “**day and night.**” The picture given is that of the devil, having an audience with God where he, as with Job, brings an accusation against us. What’s tricky about these accusations is that, though they come from the evil one, they are not without merit.

If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand (Psalm 130:3)?

It might be said that the power of this heavenly kingdom is found in what appears to be a court scene that transitions into something personal and full of comfort through love.

In this court scene, within the veil of heaven, we see the devil making (for the most part) valid accusations against us. But enter our Advocate (1 John 2:1). As we are being tossed to and fro by the valid accusations of one who would see us crumble in our own sin and guilt, someone enters the scene. All of the sudden, there is hope.

This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the *Presence* behind the veil,²⁰ where the forerunner has entered for us, *even* Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 6:19, 20).

As our Priest, Jesus pleads our case, not on the merits of our innocence, but on the merit of His own holy and “**endless life**” (Hebrews 7:16).

...how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse

your conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Hebrews 9:14)?

It is this mindset, of a cleansed conscience through the blood of Christ, that spurs us to **“serve the living God.”** This is what produces the overcomer—the one who will keep the faith (which is a primary goal in Revelation). It is from this perspective that we read,

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death (Revelation 12:11).

Paul employs a similar scene in the beautiful eighth chapter of Romans where, in light of this casting out of Satan, he rhetorically asks...

Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? *It is* God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ (Romans 8:33-35)?

Who is left in heaven to bring a charge against you? Satan is no longer accusing in heaven (where it really matters) but is cast to the earth. And on earth, the accusations are aplenty. This is why on the Lord’s Day, when we hear the pardon of sin, it should be music to our ears and followed by exuberant praise!

Yet this portion of the text ends by issuing a serious caution to the church.

Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time” (Revelation 12:12).

Having failed against Christ, and having been cast out of heaven, the devil now turns to Christ’s body on earth. The establishment of the early church would be tempestuous. They needed to know, we need to know,

that even though we have our names recorded, as it were, in heaven, the battle on earth continues. What is meant by “**a short time**” we’ll take up in our next meeting.

Questions for Study

1. Can good news or bad news change us? How? In what respect does this speak to the Gospel (pages 2, 3)?
2. How is the war in heaven an eternal way to end all wars (page 3)?
3. What had to have happened in order for the devil to flee from us (pages 3, 4)?
4. When was Satan cast out of heaven? Explain (pages 4, 5).
5. What was accomplished by Satan being cast out of heaven (page 6)?
6. What should we expect as a result of Satan being cast out (pages 6, 7)?
7. Discuss the heavenly court scene. Are the accusations against us valid? Who is our Advocate? How are we defended? What does this assure that we will never be separated from (pages 7, 8)?