

The Woman, the Dragon, and the War on Earth (Revelation 12:10-17)

Revelation 12:1-9 describes a war in heaven between God, God's people, and Satan with the Messiah, Jesus Christ, at the center of the conflict. An outcome of that heavenly conflict will be the expulsion of Satan from access to God's heaven. Satan will be thrown to the earth in those final months leading up to the return of Jesus Christ. Revelation 12:10-17 describes the celebration that will take place in heaven and the spiritual battle that will take place on earth in that day. The dragon, Satan, will continue to pursue the woman, the Jewish people. But God will protect His chosen people, preserving the Jews until the very end. This passage reminds us that, although there are severe trials God's people can always count on God to see them through. This lesson will be true of the Jewish people in the future and it's true of Christians today.

Praise in heaven—Satan is a defeated foe whom we need not fear (12:10-12).

Because Satan is evil his access to heaven, by God's sovereign permission, has no doubt tainted the joy of those who dwell there—angelic beings and human beings alike. It's no wonder, then, that heaven's inhabitants will celebrate Satan's future expulsion from heaven.

Heaven will praise God because the accuser of God's people will be thrown down (12:10).

Once again John heard a loud voice in heaven although he doesn't state who was speaking. The reference to "our brothers" indicates that this voice was representative of human beings who had arrived in heaven, possibly through martyrdom (compare Revelation 6:10). This voice declared that "now" (probably anticipating the rapidly approaching reign of Jesus Christ on earth as an accomplished fact) the "salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God has come." "Salvation" refers to both physical deliverance from the trials of the Tribulation Period as well as the spiritual deliverance from Satan's influence. "Power" refers to that future culmination of God's work in fulfilling His redemptive plan. The "kingdom," God's rule over His creation, here has as its focus the earthly messianic kingdom under "the authority" of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. In other words, the culmination of human history in the arrival on earth of Jesus Christ as King was about to transpire, thereby causing great celebration in heaven.

Another reason for this great celebration will be the expulsion of Satan from heaven. Revelation 12:9 states that as a result of the war in heaven Satan will be cast down to earth. Here in verse 10 Satan is called "the accuser of our brothers." Prior to his expulsion from heaven Satan was constantly—day and night—accusing God's people. Job 1-2 gives us a peek into this condemning work of Satan and God's willingness to tolerate Satan's accusations. However, Job 16:19-21 records Job's confidence in a heavenly advocate and intercessor. Job took comfort in knowing that God was on his side. According to 1 John 2:1 our advocate is none other than "Jesus Christ, the Righteous One." Because Jesus paid for our sins on the cross He rightly stands as our defense attorney, exonerating us in the presence of God the Father in the face of Satan's accusations. We also have an advocate in the indwelling Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7). The accusations of the enemy carry no weight in the law court of God because through faith we have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. In the future Satan will no longer be

given access to heaven and his work of accusing God's people will forever be silenced. Therefore, heaven will rejoice.

Heaven will praise God because God's people will overcome the accuser by the blood of the Lamb (12:11).

Victory over Satan is possible only through the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. His death on the cross won our victory over sin and Satan, removing the penalty for sin and restoring righteousness to all who believe. It's through the blood of Jesus Christ that God's people can declare victory, that is, "the word of their testimony." All who have received Jesus Christ by faith—past, present, and future—make the blood of Jesus Christ the focus of their testimony of victory over sin and Satan. Many, including many during the future Tribulation Period, demonstrate this testimony of faith in the face of death itself. "They did not love their lives unto death," meaning that they valued their faith in Jesus Christ even more than life itself. Such should be the attitude of all true believers. Victory over Satan through the shed blood of the Lamb is a cause for celebration in heaven.

Heaven will praise God because the accuser's time is short (12:12).

The voice that announced the defeat of Satan next invited the heavens and all who dwell in them to rejoice. Human beings and angelic beings alike could at last join in praise over the defeat of Satan. However, the earth would now experience Satan's harshest vengeance. Because Satan, "the devil," will be thrown down from heaven to earth his anger will reach its peak because he will recognize "that he has a short time." Satan's expulsion from heaven will mark the rapidly approaching return of Jesus Christ and Satan's consequent confinement in the Abyss (Revelation 20:1-3). The time between Satan's expulsion and confinement will encompass the last three and a half years of the Tribulation Period (Revelation 12:14). Satan will unleash his fury on God's people in those days in unparalleled ways, but his time is limited and he will be defeated. Heaven will rejoice because Satan's time is short. Satan is a defeated foe whom we need not fear.

**War on earth—Satan is a dangerous
foe whom we dare not disregard (12:13-17).**

Although Satan is a defeated foe whom we need not fear, we would be unwise to underestimate his power and influence in our lives. God's people find themselves in the midst of an ongoing spiritual battle. Satan's future expulsion from heaven will immensely intensify his war on earth. Even today Christians must pay attention to the realities of this spiritual conflict and lean entirely on Jesus Christ for strength, stability, and victory.

The dragon, having been thrown to the earth, will pursue the woman intending to destroy her (12:13).

Based on the description of the dragon in Revelation 12:9 and that of the woman in Revelation 12:1-2, the conflict between these two symbolic personalities reflects the warfare

between Satan and the nation of Israel, God's chosen people. The dragon will be thrown from heaven to earth. In his rage he will pursue the woman, the nation of Israel. His intent, of course, will be to hurt that which is precious to God and thereby inflict as much harm as possible. He may also imagine that by destroying the Jewish people he may interrupt and defeat God's redemptive plan.

The woman, having been given two eagle wings, will escape into the desert where she will be fed for three and half years (12:14).

During the last three and a half years of the future Tribulation Period the nation of Israel will be the subject of Satan's fiercest attacks. However, Israel—the woman—will be given “two wings of a great eagle” so that she can fly into the desert for safety. The symbolism of an eagle's wings points back to ancient Israel's flight from hardship in Egypt (Exodus 19:4), indicating swift, secure deliverance. God will provide a way of escape for His people from Satan's destructive plans. He will also provide a place of escape, a desert or wilderness experience much like that of ancient Israel. Jesus warned that those who live in that future day of hardship should flee to the mountains as a place of escape (Matthew 24:16). In that setting God will feed His people, providing for their physical needs and protecting them from “the face of the serpent.” Just as God provided manna in the wilderness for His ancient people after their escape from Egypt, He will provide food and shelter for His future people during the time of Great Tribulation. This period of protection will last for “a time, times, and half of a time,” a period equivalent to the 1,290 days, the forty-two months, and the three and a half years prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ (compare Daniel 7:25; 9:27; 12:11; Revelation 11:2-3; 12:6; 13:5).

The dragon, having been eluded by the woman, will attempt to destroy her by expelling a torrential river of water from his mouth (12:15).

Satan won't be content to let the nation of Israel escape his evil clutches. As the woman flees into her desert hideaway the dragon will spew from his mouth “water as a river” in order to carry her away in its flood. This torrential river may indeed be a literal flood of water, but since it proceeds from the mouth of the dragon, symbolic of Satan, it seems best to take this river as a symbol of a Satan-inspired army (compare Jeremiah 46:7-8; 47:1-13). The nations of the earth will turn against national Israel at the command of Satan.

The earth, helping the woman, will open its mouth and swallow the river that will come from the dragon's mouth (12:16).

In spite of a future global effort to eliminate national Israel from the face of the earth, God will protect His chosen people. The “earth” will help the woman in her flight by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that will proceed from the dragon's mouth. It may be that God will prevent Satan's armies from reaching Israel in her hiding place by throwing up protective barriers in the form of geological eruptions. According to Exodus 15:12, God protected the ancient Israelites from the approach of Egypt's army by opening His hand and allowing the earth to swallow it up. The waters of the Red Sea engulfed the Egyptians, allowing the Israelites to

escape unharmed. Something like this will occur again in the future. God will protect and preserve His chosen people.

The dragon, enraged over the woman's deliverance, will go away and make war with the rest of her children (12:17).

Because the dragon will be unable to destroy the woman—because Satan will be unable to destroy the nation of Israel—his wrath will increase all the more. In that day Satan will abandon his effort to destroy national Israel and will instead “make war with the rest of her seed.” Those who will become the object of Satan’s wrath are described as “the rest,” a word for a remnant of people. They are those who “obey God’s commandments” and “have the testimony of Jesus.” In other words, there will be a remnant of physical descendants of Israel who are not among those who flee into the desert and will become the objects of Satan’s wrath. Those who are protected in the desert constitute the identifiable nation of Israel in that day, but many Jews scattered throughout the world will in fact be subject to severe persecution. This remnant may include the 144,000 Jewish missionaries (Revelation 7:1-8; 14:1-5) but will also include a great number of other Jews included in the great multitude of Revelation 7:9. According to Zechariah 13:8-9 fully two-thirds of the Jews living in that future Tribulation Period will be killed, but God will preserve His chosen people as an identifiable nation that will turn to faith in Jesus as its Messiah (Zechariah 12:10-13; Romans 11:26-27). Although this persecution will be specifically aimed at Jewish believers, Gentile believers will no doubt suffer in the fray.

Satan is a harsh enemy. We dare not underestimate his power or disregard his hatred for those who love God. In that future day Satan’s wrath will reach its climax, but even today Christians must stay on guard against this enemy of our souls. While we guard against the schemes of Satan we remember that Satan is a defeated foe. Jesus is our victorious Lord. Our victory is secure in Him. Although we may face severe trials God’s people can always count on God to see us through.