

23.02.2019 SATAN, A DEFEATED ENEMY

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

Introduction:

Last week's study ended with the blowing of the seventh trumpet. The seventh trumpet outlines the content of the remainder of the book of Revelation. The remainder of the book focuses on key events leading up to the Second Coming and the setting up of God's eternal Kingdom on earth.

"The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth." Revelation 11:18

(1) *The nations were angry*: Revelation 12-14 describes Satan as filled with anger (Rev. 12:17), who with his two allies - the sea beast and the earth beast - prepares the nations of the world to fight against God's people.

(2) *Your wrath has come*: God's answer to the anger of the nations is the seven last plagues, which are referred to as God's wrath (Rev. 15:1).

(3) *The time for the dead to be judged* is described in Revelation 20:11-15.

(4) *And to reward God's servants* is portrayed in Revelation 21 and 22.

(5) *To destroy those who destroy the earth*: Revelation 19:2 states that end-time Babylon is judged because it destroyed the earth. The destruction of Satan, his hosts, and his two allies is the final act in the drama of the great controversy (Rev. 19:11-20:15).

This week's study is Revelation 12. This chapter reveals to us the story of the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan and the hatred of Satan for God's people. It is a wonderful chapter that reaffirms God's care and protection of His people on earth.

Revelation 12 portrays the history of both Old and New Testament Israel in four stages:

(1) The period before the birth of Christ, with a glimpse of Israel represented by a woman (Rev. 12:1, 2) and the original expulsion of Satan from heaven (Rev. 12:3, 4)

(2) The birth, ascension, and enthronement of Christ, with a flashback to the war in heaven, as seen in the light of the Cross (Rev. 12:5, Rev. 7-11)

(3) The history of the Christian church between the two advents of Jesus, with a particular focus on the persecution of the church during the Middle Ages (Rev. 12:6, 13-16)

(4) The experience of the end-time remnant in the final days of earth's history (Rev. 12:17).

Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then being with child, she cried out in labour and in pain to give birth. 12:1, 2

In Biblical symbolism, a woman represents the Church. A pure woman represents the church in purity (a pure church); an impure woman (a harlot or a prostitute) represents the church in apostasy (an apostate church).

Described above is the Church of the Old Testament (the nation of Israel) through whom came the male Child, Christ Jesus.

And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. 12:3

Who is this dragon? Revelation 12:9 tells us...*'the great dragon...that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world.'*

His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. 12:4

The tail is symbolic of deception (see Isaiah 9:14, 15 and Revelation 9:10). Satan deceived one third of the angels (angels are described as stars and sons of God (Job 38:7). Satan and his angels were cast down to earth.

When Satan deceived Eve and then Adam, the dominion and rule of planet earth was transferred from Adam to Satan. Until Calvary, though Satan (*Hebrew: the Adversary*) was cast out of heaven, he still had access to heaven as we know from the story of Job (Job 1:6) because he was the ruler of planet earth (see John 12:31, 16:11 and 14:30). For thousands of years, Satan waited for the Christ child to be born so that he could destroy Him. Jesus described Satan as *'a liar and a murderer from the beginning'* (John 8:44).

But Satan was unsuccessful in destroying Christ (though he tried many times) until the time came for Christ to lay down His life and redeem mankind.

She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. 12:5

After His work of redemption, Christ was taken up to heaven (Acts 9:1-11) and was enthroned at the right hand of God the Father (Revelation 5).

And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. 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. 12:7-9

When Christ died at Calvary, He won the definitive victory over Satan. When Christ rose from the dead, Satan knew that his doom was certain. He was now truly cast out of heaven, for Christ had regained dominion over the earth as the second Adam. Henceforth Satan had no access to heaven as the ruler of planet earth. He and his angels are now confined to planet earth, to 'the abyss' as described in Revelation 9:1, 2.

When Jesus was laid in the grave, Satan triumphed. He dared to hope that the Saviour would not take up His life again. He claimed the Lord's body, and set his guard about the tomb, seeking to hold Christ a prisoner. He was bitterly angry when his angels fled at the approach of the heavenly messenger. When he saw Christ come forth in triumph, he knew that his kingdom would have an end, and that he must finally die. *Desire of Ages:p 785.*

"Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." John 12:31, 32

Judgment has been passed on Satan. When Christ's death and resurrection ensured the final fall of Satan, a loud voice is heard in heaven saying:

"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. 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. 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." 12:10-12

The judgment and condemnation of Satan produces 2 reactions:

1. **Joy to all who dwell in the heavens.** This includes all Christ's followers who by faith are dwelling in heavenly places (Ephesians 1:4; 2:6) and are worshipping God in His temple (Revelation 11:1). They have entered with boldness into

the Most Holy by the blood of Christ, in full assurance of faith (Hebrews 10:19-23). Revelation 12:11 describes them as having overcome Satan the Accuser, by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony.

2. **Woe to the inhabitants of the earth** and the sea i.e. those who have rejected Christ and His salvation.

Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. 12:13, 14

Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days. 12:6

The two time periods mentioned above refer to prophetic time or 1260 years. This corresponds to the duration of persecution by the little horn power of Daniel 7:23-25.

The pure church which held onto the true gospel was 'in the wilderness' during this period; often in hiding from the power of the state and the state church.

So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. 12:15

Water refers to '*peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues*' (Revelation 17:15). So countries and peoples under the power of apostate Christianity became tools in the hand of Satan to persecute the true church.

But God had promised in Isaiah that '*when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him*' Isaiah 59:19.

Water spewing out of the dragon's mouth also refers to the main strategy of Satan after his defeat. He is the great Deceiver. With his mouth he deceives the whole world (Rev 12:9) and his agents speak great things against the Most High (Daniel 7:8, 20) .

But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. 12:16

Historically, this refers to the New World, where many who fled from persecution in the Old World, found refuge.

And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring (the remnant of her seed - KJV), who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. 12:17

'The rest of her offspring' refers to those who will remain faithful while the majority (of her offspring) have left the true gospel.

These faithful ones keep God's commandments i.e. they do His will and they have the testimony of Jesus. The expression "the testimony of Jesus" refers either to "the testimony borne by Jesus Himself" in His own ministry while He was on earth, or to His self-revelation to the church "by the working of the Holy Spirit through inspiring His servants the prophets". To have the testimony of Jesus is not restricted to the end-time church, but is the essential characteristic of Christ's faithful followers during the entire Christian age. Apostasy occurs when the church departs from the testimony of Jesus.

Revelation 12:17 also sets the scene for Revelation 13 where we are told how the dragon (Satan) prepares to make war against the remnant.

Planet Earth has become the battlefield of the great controversy. Having failed in his effort to destroy Christ and sweep away the church, Satan is filled with fury. He is determined to enter his final battle and win the victory over those who

are identified as the remnant of the woman's offspring living at the last period of this earth's history. The last-day events are thus Satan's last attempt to destroy the saints and prevent the accomplishment of God's purpose in the world. This indicates that in the final battle between Christ and Satan, the church is on the front line.

Christians find themselves between the Doom's Day of the decisive battle when Christ won victory over Satan at the cross, and the Victory Day of Christ's return to the earth and the final surrender of Satan. Until then, according to Paul, Christ "must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet" (1 Cor. 15:25). "The hope of the final victory is so much the more vivid because of the unshakeably firm conviction that the battle that decides the victory has already taken place." S.Rankovic: Revelation.

Conclusion:

The purpose of Revelation 12 is, first of all, to tell God's people that end-time events are a part of the great conflict between Christ and Satan. The book warns God's people about what they are facing today and are about to confront in an even more serious manner in the future—an experienced and furious enemy. Paul warns us of the end-time activity "of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (2 Thess. 2:9, 10, NKJV).

Revelation urges us to take the future seriously and make our dependence on God our priority. On the other side, Revelation assures us that although Satan is a strong and experienced enemy, he is not strong enough to overcome Christ (see Rev. 12:8). For God's people, hope can be found only in the One who in the past has victoriously defeated Satan and his demonic forces. And He has promised to be with His faithful followers "'always, even to the end of the age'" (Matt. 28:20, NKJV)
