

The Book of Revelation

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever." (Revelation 11:15)

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High Level Outline of the Book of Revelation

- Introduction (1:1-8)
- Jesus Among the Seven Churches (1:9-20)
- Letters to the Seven Churches: (2-3)
- The Throne of God and the Lamb (4-5)
- Three Sets of Divine Judgments (6:1-16:21)
  - Seven Seals (6:1-17; 8:1)
    - Interlude Between Seal 6 and 7: Sealing of the 144,000 (7:1-8); Great Multitude Before the Throne (7:9-17)
  - Seven Trumpets (8:2-9:21; 11:14-19)
    - Interlude Between Trumpet 6 and 7: Angel and the Scroll (10:1-11); Measuring the Temple (11:1-2); The Two Witnesses (11:3-13)
  - Interlude Between Trumpets and Bowls: Persecution, Deliverance and Judgment (12–14)
  - Seven Bowls (15–16)
- The Fall of Babylon (17:1-19:10)
- The Last Battle (19:11-20:15)
- The Marriage of Heaven and Earth (21:1-22:5)
- Epilogue (22:6-21)

War in Heaven (12:7-12)

12:7 And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. 8 But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. 9 The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. 10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. 11 They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. 12 Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short."

12:7 Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. (ESV)

- We have here the description of a "*war… in heaven*."
- But as we get further into the passage, we will see that there is also a ***legal*** dimension to this conflict, introduced by the accusation language of 12:10: the defeat of the "*dragon*" in battle coincides with the expulsion of "*the accuser*" from the heavenly court.
- The Greek word for "*war*" here (*polemos*) denotes armed conflict, though its range of meaning includes "strife, conflict, quarrel" (James 4:1).
- Read together, the military imagery of 12:7–9 and the legal imagery of 12:10 present the angelic "*war*" as, in effect, the means by which Satan is disbarred from his status as prosecutor in the court of divine justice.

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- ***Chronologically***, this "*war*":
  - ***Follows*** Christ's glorification at the ascension (AD 30)
  - But ***precedes*** the 1,260 days (3 ½ years) of the Jewish War (12:6)
- As we have discussed in earlier sections:
  - Christ received "*all authority in heaven and on earth*" at his resurrection and ascension (Matthew 28:18; Romans 1:4; Philippians 2:9–11) and with that authority he "*disarmed the rulers and authorities*" (Colossians 2:15).
  - But the full ***visible*** proof of Christ's authority ***on earth*** was delayed until the overthrow of the church's first enemy, Israel – as evidenced by Jesus' statement that some of his hearers would not "*taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power*" (Mark 9:1) – this took place 40 years later in AD 70.

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- "*Michael*" – I was surprised to discover that a ***number*** of commentators – including several well-known older theologians (such as Calvin, Gill, and Matthew Henry) along with almost ***all*** my preterist commentaries (including Gentry), argue that ***every*** place where the scriptures refer to "*Michael*" the angelic "*prince*" or "*archangel*" (cf. Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 1:9) is, in fact, a reference to the preincarnate or exalted Christ manifesting himself in angelic form!
- But after an extensive review, I do not find the arguments for "*Michael*" as an angelic manifestation of Christ here (and elsewhere) to be very persuasive.
- Instead, I agree with the vast majority of contemporary and historical commentators (including Bleek, Stuart, Morris, Mounce, Beale, Aune, and Brighton) who maintain the traditional view that "*Michael*" is, as you would expect, an angelic being (specifically an archangel, as referenced in Jude 9), serving as a heavenly defender or prince of God's people.

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- "*Michael and his angels [are] fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back*" but "*the dragon and his angels*" are "*defeated*"!
- Their defeat means that "*there was no longer any place for them in heaven*", particularly before God's judicial throne.
- Previously, Satan could appear before the throne of God as an accuser of God's servants.
- For example, we can see where he challenged Job's integrity and stood ready to accuse Joshua the high priest (Job 1:6–12; 2:1–6; Zechariah 3:1–2).
- The vision now announces the termination of that prosecuting position.
- Christ's completed redemption answers the charges against his people.
- This is especially appropriate because in the ***preceding*** scene (Rev 12:5) we saw that Christ was "*caught [or taken] up*" to God's throne (in his ascension).
- So that the exalted Savior now exercises his authority from the throne of God, the place where Satan ***formerly*** brought accusations.

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- Jesus Christ, the one who died and rose for believers, also ***intercedes*** for them, making their condemnation impossible:
  - *"Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised – who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us."* (Romans 8:33–34)
  - *"Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them."* (Hebrews 7:25)

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- Satan's defeat does not mean that he ceases to exist or immediately loses every opportunity to do evil.
- It means that he is denied the heavenly standing from which he previously challenged the acceptance of God's people.
- Christ's authority over demons during his earthly ministry ***anticipated*** this victory: *"The seventy-two [disciples sent out by Jesus] returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!' And he said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.'"* (Luke 10:17–18)
- This decisive legal accomplishment is a result of Christ's redemptive work and exaltation, when angels, authorities, and powers were subjected to him: *"[Christ] has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him."* (1 Peter 3:22).

12:9 *And 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.* (ESV)

- Here John explicitly identifies the "*great dragon*" as the "*ancient serpent*", the "*devil*" and "*Satan*".
- The reference to the "*ancient serpent*" connects the vision with humanity's fall and the original promise of redemption (2 Corinthians 11:3; Genesis 3:1–15).
- These names also explain the enemy's methods.
- "*Satan*" identifies him as an ***adversary***, while "*devil*" emphasizes the fact the he brings ***slander*** and ***false accusations*** against the people of God.
- These ideas (adversary, slander, and false accusations) are the kinds of things you see in a ***courtroom*** setting.
- "*Satan*" opposes God's people by challenging their standing, distorting the truth, and promoting charges against them.
- His deception ***began*** in Eden and ***continues*** throughout "*the whole world*" over the course of human history.

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- Satan's deception also shows itself in the earthly opposition to Christ and his witnesses, as when false witnesses accused Christ (Matthew 26:59–60) and Stephen (Acts 6:13) and Christ himself was called a "deceiver" (Matthew 27:63).
- Behind these kinds of accusations stands the ***great slanderer***.
- From this we see that there is a connection between Satan as the great deceiver and accuser and the persecution of God's people.
- The hostile authorities who prosecuted Christians were often acting as instruments of that same enemy.
- Revelation's descriptions of "*the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan*" are an example of this. (Revelation 2:9 cf. 3:9)

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- The ***repeated*** declaration that Satan is "*thrown down*" emphasizes the ***certainty*** and ***finality*** of his judicial defeat:
  - The dragon is "*thrown down*"
  - He is "*thrown down to the earth*"
  - And "*his angels were thrown down with him*"
- Heaven's verdict cannot be reversed.
- Note this expulsion is ***not*** a description of Satan's ***original fall***; it is a description of Satan's ***defeat*** as a result of Christ's victory.
- Jesus ***anticipated*** this defeat of Satan when he announced that the "*ruler of this world*" (i.e. Satan) would be "*cast out*" through his approaching death: "*…now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.*" (John 12:31–33).

12:10 And 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. (ESV)

- The "*loud voice*" represents the united proclamation of a heavenly multitude
- The "*voice*" speaks of "*our God*" and "*our brothers*," suggesting it is proclaimed by heavenly saints, perhaps the twenty-four elders, as they represent the elect believers in heaven.
- "*our brothers*" is most likely a reference to genuine Christians who are spoken of in the next verse as those who "*loved not their lives even unto death*" (12:11; 6:9).
- The hymn they sing here describes the preceding "*war… in heaven*".
- "*salvation*", "*power*", "*the kingdom of our God*", and "*the authority of his Christ*" have all been manifested because the accuser has been expelled.
- "*salvation*" is a word that is often used to describe victory over an enemy.
- This is similar to the language used to describe Israel's rescue from Egypt, where "*salvation*" described God's victory over the oppressor (Exodus 14:13, 30; 15:2).
- Here, believers have been delivered from Satan's accusations through the Lamb's completed redemption.

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- "*power*" is God's strength to deliver.
- The "*great red dragon*" (12:3) who swept away a third of the stars (12:4) is defeated, and his kingdom is displaced by "*the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ*" – similar to what was stated earlier in 11:15.
- Satan's accusations occurring "*day and night*" indicate that it was an unceasing activity on his part, even with Christ himself.
- His relentless hostility appeared during Jesus' ministry on earth, Satan brought slanderous legal accusations against him through the Jewish religious authorities.
- In Luke 22:3-4, we see Satan moving Judas to betray him to members of Israel's high court, the Sanhedrin.
- Ironically, Judas' betrayal helped bring about Christ's death through which Satan's own defeat was accomplished!
- Christ's victory therefore transforms our position as believers before God.
- Our accuser has now been evicted from heaven, while our Redeemer now occupies the place of ***authority*** and ***intercession***.

12:11 *And 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.* (ESV)

- Those who "*have conquered [NIV: "overcame"]*" in this context are believing first century Jews.
- The Greek word for "*conquered*" here (*nikao*) can mean to overcome "in a legal action."
- These believers legally overcame Satan's accusations before God's throne.
- On what basis were they able to overcome Satan's accusations against them? The text mentions ***two*** things:
  - "*the blood of the Lamb*" – is the ***actual*** cause of their acquittal and redemption (1:5; 5:9; 7:14)
  - "*the word of their testimony*" – is the ***evidential result*** in their lives that ***testified*** to their victory.
- The phrase "*they loved not their lives even unto death*" includes both actual martyrs and those willing to die who escaped to the wilderness (12:6, 14).
- They refuse to make earthly survival their highest loyalty.
- Their willingness to face death demonstrates the depth of their faithfulness.

12:12 *Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth [Land] and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"* (ESV)

- Here the heavenly witnesses are called upon to "*rejoice*" because their accuser has been conquered.
- The situation on the "*earth*" below is different:
- Satan's expulsion ***restricts*** his activity but ***intensifies*** his rage.
- His defeat prompts him to initiate a ***new*** assault against the people that he can still reach.
- The "*earth*" probably means the "*land*" of Israel, while the "*sea*" represents the Gentile world (cf. Isaiah 17:12–13; 57:20; Jeremiah 6:22–23), in this context that would be the Romans.
- Though the devil's efforts are ***focused*** on "*the woman*" (believing Israel) (12:13), both unbelieving Israel and unbelieving Gentiles within the Roman empire will ***also*** suffer "*woe*" as a result of the devil's intensified efforts after he has "*come down*" to them out of heaven.

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- Here the "*great red dragon*" (12:3b) who we saw cast "*a third of the stars [fallen angels] of heaven*" down to earth (12:4), now exhibits "*great wrath*" when ***he*** is cast down (12:9,10,13).
- He does this "*because he knows that his time is short!*."
- As a result of his defeat in heaven, he no longer has access to God's throne to accuse God's people; he now will only be able to do his work on earth.
- The dragon has ***little time*** to ruin the church while she is still tied to old Israel, so he sets "*Land*" of Israel (and its unbelieving Jews) and the "*sea*" (which in this context symbolizes the Romans):
  - ***First*** against the church
  - ***Then*** against each other
- After AD 70 the church will be ***separated*** from old covenant Israel.

War on Earth (12:13-17)

12:13 When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth,
he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. 14
The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she
might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she
would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the
serpent's reach. 15 *Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water*
like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the
torrent. 16 *But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth*
and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his
mouth. 17 *Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went*
off to make war against the rest of her offspring--those who obey
God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. (NIV)

12:13 And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. 14 But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. (ESV)

- The "*woman*" here symbolizes believing first-century Israel (as we established last time when we covered verse 6), consisting primarily of the Jewish-Christian church at Jerusalem (also metaphorically symbolized by the "*144,000*" of 7:4–8 and 14:1).
- Satan ***persecutes*** the believing Jerusalem church in a desperate attempt to ***destroy*** them.
- But his action results in defeat, not victory.
- The persecution of believing Jews in the Land of Israel is Satanically inspired; soon John will mention Roman persecution of the broader church located ***outside*** of Jerusalem (12:17; 13:7).

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- Throughout the book of Acts the Romans were generally ***protective*** of Christians (Acts 25:11–12; 28:17–20); only ***later*** did imperial hostility intensify.
- The "*two wings of the great eagle*" alludes to the Exodus where the Lord said to Israel at that time: "*I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself*" (Ex 19:4; cf. Dt 32:10–11).
- The church's departure from Jerusalem is an "exodus" from old covenant Israel, identified now as the new "*Egypt*" (11:8).
- During the ***original*** Exodus, "*the wilderness*" is where Israel became the Lord's "bride": "*I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness*" (Jeremiah 2:2; cf. Ezekiel 16:8; Hosea 2:15–16; Exodus 24:3).

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- One of the major themes in the book of Revelation is God's ***divorce*** of unfaithful Israel in order to take a new bride (referred to here as "*the woman*"), who again finds herself in "*the wilderness*".
- It tells us here that "*the woman*" is "*nourished*" there for "*time, and times, and half a time*" (= three and a half years) – which corresponds to the "*1,260 days*" mentioned in Rev 12:6 – the same period of time that it tells us in ***that*** passage that "*the woman*" is "*nourished*" in "*the wilderness*".
- This is ***also*** the period of time that Daniel 12:7 prophesied would bring about "*the shattering of the power of the holy people*" which in ***that*** context refers to the destruction on the Jews by the Roman armies.
- "*that she might fly from the serpent*" – protected from "*the serpent*" (Satan), "*the woman*" (believing Israel) is safe while Jerusalem itself is overwhelmed by demonic activity and Roman savagery (9:1–21).

12:15 The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. 16 But the earth [Land] came to the help of the woman, and the earth [Land] opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. (ESV)

- In scripture, "*flood*" imagery is often used (as it is here) to depict overwhelming trouble or (in this case) invading armies (2 Sam 22:5; Pss 69:2, 15; 124:4–5; Isa 8:6–8; 28:1–2; Jer 46:7–8; 47:2; Dan 9:26; 11:10, 22).
- Here the "*flood*" represents the Roman armies pouring into the "*Land*" (of Israel) as Satan's instrument, in an attempt to destroy the Jerusalem church.
- But the "*Land*" (of Israel) "*swallowed the river*" instead!
- In other words, the Roman invasion forces the Jewish authorities to abandon their persecution of Christians and focus all their energies fighting against Rome.
- This is reminiscent of the Red Sea swallowing Pharaoh's army (Ex 14–15).
- As we have mentioned before, the initial Roman police action under Cestius Gallus in AD 66 ended in sudden retreat, after which Nero declared formal war, giving Christians a chance to flee in obedience to Jesus' command when they saw the city surrounded by armies (Lk 21:20–21).
- Thus, Satan failed in his attempt, because the believing Jews (his target) "*fled into the wilderness*" leaving the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem to absorb the impact of the invading Roman army.

12:17 *Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.* (ESV)

- The dragon's frustration now produces a ***wider*** attack.
- Unable to destroy the mother church, he turns against her remaining children.
- "*the rest of her offspring*" are the daughter churches beyond the borders of Israel—the Gentile church throughout the Roman Empire (cf. Mt 28:19; Jn 10:16; Acts 1:8) – many of which had been planted by the Apostle Paul.
- The mother-and-children imagery reflects biblical descriptions of Zion as the mother of God's people (Isaiah 66:7–9).
- Their defining characteristics are "*those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus*".
- Their connection with the mother church rests on shared allegiance to the same Lord.

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- "*And he stood on the sand of the sea*" – this statement prepares us for chapter 13, where Roman power becomes the instrument of the dragon's warfare.
- The pattern is consistent and encouraging:
  - Satan attacks Christ and is thwarted (Rev 12:5);
  - Satan sends the Roman army to attack the believing Jews in Jerusalem and is thwarted (12:15-16);
  - Rome will make war on the rest of the woman's children and will likewise be thwarted (13:10).

Class Discussion Time

- We were reminded in today's lesson that Jesus Christ, the one who died and rose for believers, also intercedes for them, making their condemnation impossible:
  - "*Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised – who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us*." (Romans 8:33–34)
  - "*Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them*." (Hebrews 7:25)
- What practical implications does this have for us in our Christian lives?

Class Discussion Time

- We also saw today that Satan's deception also shows itself in the earthly opposition to Christ and those who server as his witnesses.
- From this we see that there is a connection between Satan as the great deceiver and accuser and the persecution of God's people.
- The hostile authorities who prosecuted Christians were often acting as instruments of that same enemy.
- This brings to my mind the admonition given the man of God in 2 Timothy:
  - *[Correct] opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.* (2Tim 2:25-26)
- What impact might this have on your outlook when you experience persecution from those who oppose you as you live out your Christian faith?

Class Discussion Time

- In today's lesson we saw believers who were said to overcome Satan's accusations before God's throne.
- They were said to do so on the basis of "*the blood of the Lamb*" and "*the word of their testimony*" i.e., the genuineness of their faith that was evident in their lives and testified to their victory.
- One of those evidences was "*they loved not their lives even unto death*".
- They refused to make earthly survival their highest loyalty.
- Their willingness to face death demonstrates the depth of their faithfulness.
- What is the practical application for us here?