

The War of the Ages

Revelation 12

Chapter twelve pauses again to give a historic context to the events before us. Scriptures describe this seven-year period of trial as having two main parts to it – the Beginning of Sorrows and the Great Tribulation.

The first 3½ years are described as “the beginning of sorrows” (Matt. 24:7-8).

“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of sorrows.”

The last half of the tribulation is described in three ways – The Great Tribulation, Jacob’s Trouble and the Day of the Lord.

1. The Great Tribulation:

In Matthew 24:15 we find Jesus referring to the middle part of the tribulation when He speaks of “the abomination of desolation” (see Daniel 9:27).

Then He says in Matthew 24:21-22,

“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. ²² And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened” (Mat. 24:21-22).

This passage tells us that the Great Tribulation will begin **after** the abomination of desolation of Daniel 9:27.

2. **The Time of Jacob's Trouble:**

The prophet Jeremiah speaks of this time and calls it **The Time of Jacob's Trouble**.

“Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even **the time of Jacob's trouble**; but he shall be saved out of it. ⁸ For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him.”

3. **The Day of the Lord:**

So, allow me to summarize what we have seen so far in our study of the Book of Revelation.

In Revelation 6-11 we found the world reeling in pain for 3½ years. As we mentioned before, this is the period known as the *“beginning of sorrows”* (Matthew 24:8). During this time the world is ravaged with war, famine, pestilence, and death. Following this, two meteoric events occur and there is a demonic outpouring upon men. The combined sorrow of this period kills half of the world's population.

Amazingly, we find Israel surviving this first half of the tribulation. They were even able to build and maintain some form of temple worship, but this is about to come to screeching halt. Right in the middle of the tribulation period anti-Semitism suddenly explodes on the scene. The Antichrist defiles the temple, and his hosts seek to wipe Israel off the map. Hence, the title of the next 3 ½ years – Jacob's Trouble. The nation of Israel is forced to flee for their lives.

But don't lose sight of the other terms describing this latter half of the tribulation. It is also called, the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. These terms depict the final battles resulting from the war of ages. These terrible days describe God's final assault against Satan, his demonic forces and rebellious man. In these final days, the world will be brought to its knees as our LORD establishes His rightful rule over all things.

Revelation 12 is an important chapter, for it unveils the war of the ages.

This great conflict has plagued mankind throughout the ages. It began with the fall of Lucifer [Isaiah 14:12-15].

“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! ¹³ For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. ¹⁵ Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.”

Satan opposes everything about God. He hates God and His plan of redemption. From the Garden of Eden onward, Satan's desire has been to capture the will and souls of men so they will worship him and forsake their Creator and their true God.

This chapter will show anti-Semitism at its worse. In light of this age-old conflict, this twelfth chapter introduces seven great actors of the Tribulation period – five are listed in chapter 12 and two are found in chapter 13. Listed below are the seven key personages: The woman (Rev. 12:1-2); The dragon (Rev. 12:3-4a); The man-child (Rev. 12:4b-5, 13); Michael, the archangel – (Rev. 12:7-8); The remnant seed of Israel (Rev. 12:11); The beast out of the

sea – the world dictator, the Antichrist (Rev. 13:1-2f); The beast out of the earth – the false religious leader, the False Prophet (Rev. 13:11f).

This lesson will discuss the first five this morning.

THE WOMAN [12:1-2]

“And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: ² And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.”

The woman is the first of the seven great personages described in this chapter of Revelation. The word “wonder” [σημείον *semeion*], can also translated as “a great sign.” She is a sign or symbol of a great truth. Although the sign is seen in heaven, it portrays a reality on the earth – the persecution of the Jewish people.

Her clothing:

She is described as clothed with the sun, moon, and stars. This is an allusion to Genesis 37:9-11 where the heavenly bodies represent Jacob and Rachel and their twelve sons – the nation of Israel.

Joseph’s dream:

“And he [Joseph] dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, **the sun** and **the moon** and the **eleven stars** made obeisance to me” (Gen. 37:9).

Jacob’s Interpretation:

“And he (*Joseph*) told *it* to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him,

‘What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall **I** and thy **mother** and thy **brethren** indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying” (Gen. 37:10).

Jacob saw that in Joseph’s dream he was the **Sun**. **Rachel** his wife was the **moon**. **The stars** were the **sons of Jacob** (in this case 11 minus Joseph).

In Revelation 12:1

The Sun and the **Moon** under her feet are the same as they were in Genesis 37. **Jacob** is the sun, **Rachel** is the Moon. **The Stars** represent the sons of Jacob, the twelve tribes which are the crown of Israel. **The Woman** depicts Jacob’s lineage which now forms the nation of Israel. A little later in this passage it will focus on just one woman from the tribe of Judah.

The Travailing in Birth:

“And she (*the nation*) being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.” – Revelation 12:2

The nation of Israel is depicted in this verse as travail in birth. They are suffering from the enemy’s hatred of their place in God’s plan in bring forth the Deliverer. Throughout the ages Satan has sought to crush this nation and prevent the Messiah from coming. If you wipe out Israel, you overthrow God’s plan for redemption. Hence the age-old hatred of the nation of Israel. If you wipe out Israel, you overthrow the promises of God.

Even after the birth of the Messiah, Israel is still under attack. Frequently in Scripture, Israel is pictured as going through great trials and tribulations. Israel has suffered greatly, but her greatest persecution is yet to come in the time of Jacob’s trouble [Jer. 30:7; Matt. 24:21-22].

The nation of Israel has always been the object of Satan's hatred and wrath for if he cannot kill the Messiah, he will try to destroy the nation [the woman] that brought forth the Messiah.

THE GREAT RED DRAGON [12:3-4]

The second great sign appearing in the heaven is described as a great red dragon. He is none other the Satan, God's adversary.

The Names of Satan:

- a. "a great red dragon" [v. 3]

The color red depicts him as the main source or cause of much bloodshed throughout history, beginning with Adam and Eve – the first animal killed [Gen. 3:21] and the first human killed [Gen. 4:8].

- b. "that old serpent" [v. 9]

Satan is first mentioned in the book of Genesis where he deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden. He was very clever for he got Eve to doubt God's Word.

- c. "the Devil" [v. 9]

This is the name used in the Gospels for this enemy of God [Matt. 4:1-3]. The word devil means *slanderer* or *accuser* [Job 1:8-10; 2:3-5].

- d. "Satan" [v. 9]

This name means *adversary, an opponent*. He is the one who opposes God and all of God's children.

- e. "the accuser of our brethren" [v. 10]

This indicates his work before the throne of God today, seeking to accuse the saints before God.

Seven heads, ten horns and seven crowns [vs. 3]

This is referring to Satan's rule over the earth through human governments. The seven heads refer to seven kingdoms [Rev.17:9-10] – Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece [past], Rome [one is] and the revised Roman Empire [one yet to come].

The ten horns refer to the ten kings who will be in power during the Tribulation period. These ten kings will endorse the authority and power of the Antichrist [Dan. 7:24].

The seven crowns points to the kings. Three of the ten kings will rebel against Antichrist's rule and will be subdued – hence the seven crowns that remain loyal to the Antichrist [Dan. 7:24]. Under this evil dictator, wickedness, death, destruction and human suffering will be beyond human comprehension.

The fall of Satan [v.4a]

“And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth”

This probably refers to the original fall of Satan where Lucifer influenced one-third of the angels to follow him in disobedience against God. Lucifer now known as Satan, fell because of his pride [Isaiah 14:12-15]. He will continue to try to thwart God's redemptive plan until he is thrown into the eternal lake of fire [Rev. 20:10]. Although Satan and his evil angels were thrown out of heaven after his fall, Satan himself still has access to the throne of God to accuse believers [Job 1:6-10].

Satan is opposed to God in three areas. **As an accuser** of the brethren, he is in opposition to Christ as priest [Heb. 6:20]. **As the one who brings forth the first beast** [Antichrist], he is in opposition to Christ as king [Rev. 19:13-16] As bringing forth the second beast [the False Prophet], he is opposed to Christ as prophet [Matt. 21:11].

Satan's conflict with the woman:

Ever since the promised of a Messiah [Gen. 3:15], Satan has been determined to destroy "the seed of the woman" – the murder of Abel [Gen. 4], the pollution of the human race [Gen. 6], the decree of Haman [Esther 3:8-15] and Herod's decree to kill babies [Matt. 2:16]. This conflict will reach its climax during the Tribulation period.

THE MAN-CHILD - JESUS CHRIST [12:5-6]

The child's identity. The identity of this child is very obvious to those familiar with God's Word for there is only One who "will rule all the nations with an iron scepter [12:5]." This man-child is Jesus Christ. Another proof of his identity is only Christ has been resurrected to heaven where He is now seated at the right hand of God the Father [Mark 16:19].

Notice here an individual woman is viewed – Revelation 12:5

"And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and *to* his throne."

We moved from the nation of Israel to a Jewish woman in this passage. The woman is Mary.

The Messiah comes with this purpose:

1 John 3:8 "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might **destroy** the works of the devil."

Hebrews 2:14 "He [Jesus] also himself likewise took part of the same [flesh and blood]; that through death he might **destroy** him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;"

John 12:31 "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. ³² And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me."

Luke 19:10 “For the Son of man is come to **seek** and to save that which was lost.”

God sent His Son . . . To redeem His people, Israel. For Zechariah prophesied “Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people” (Luke 1:68). To . . . **redeemed** us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us (Gal 3:13). To **redeem** them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons (Gal. 4:5).

That he might **redeem** us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (Titus 2:14).

Rom. 8:21 tells us that even “creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

So, it is with little surprise that we see Satan seeking to destroy the Man-Child.

A side note: Revelation 12:5-6 parallels the seventy weeks of Daniel [Dan. 9:24-27] in that the church age is omitted. This prophesy refers to the Jewish people not the Gentile church. **Rev. 12:5** covers the time up to Christ’s birth and resurrection. **Rev. 12:6** deals with a future time when Israel will flee for their lives in the last half of the Tribulation period [Matt. 24:15-22].

Where they will flee to the place God has prepared for them in the desert. Just as God provided for Israel in the wilderness during Moses’ day, so will He provide for Israel during the last 1,260 days of the Tribulation period. God will provide water and food [Is. 33:15-16]. He will be faithful to His people during this terrible time of persecution.

MICHAEL - THE ARCHANGEL [12:7]

Satan will make one final attempt to gain the universe from the Almighty God. There will war in heaven as well as on earth.

War in Heaven [12:7-12]

This war will take place in the atmospheric or starry heaven between the holy angels led by Michael the archangel and the fallen angels led by Satan. Michael, the commanding general of the heavenly host, will battle the great dragon. As a result of this conflict, Satan and his hosts are cast out of heaven onto the earth. This is a major step in Satan’s ultimate defeat for he is now limited in his sphere of operation. He will be the cause of untold death and

destruction, especially in the last 3 ½ years [v. 12].

The announcement of deliverance [v. 10]

The shout from heaven may be from the Tribulation saints that have pleaded for God's deliverance [6:9-10]. This is a shout of triumph and praise for God's kingdom is at hand.

The means of deliverance [v. 11]

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”

By the blood - Satan's defeat is through the blood of the Lamb. **The accusations of Satan are nullified by the blood of Christ** that makes the believers pure and enables believers to have victory over sin.

By the Word - The preaching of the Word of God is the power of God unto salvation [Rom. 1:16]. **The deceiving works of Satan are exposed in the light and truth of God's inspired Word.**

By their death - Although these precious saints did not seek a martyr's death, **they stood firmly on God's Word** and gave their lives for the testimony of their faith in Jesus Christ.

The results of deliverance are twofold. The believers are to rejoice. The victory is theirs through Christ. They are to rejoice for God's plan of redemption will soon be completed and God's kingdom will reign forever.

The unbelievers are warned. A solemn woe is given to the unredeemed. Their “king” is cast to the earth and his wrath is fierce as his end draws near. Satan will kill a countless number of saints and will cause widespread human suffering throughout the earth.

War on Earth [12:13-17].

Although heaven will rejoice that Satan is thrown out of heaven, the earth will not share in that joy. Satan will come to earth with a vengeance and hatred the earth has never seen before. He will direct his wrath at the nation of Israel, God's chosen people.

God's protection over Israel [v. 14]

The God's faithfulness is shown in that Israel is given the wings of an eagle

[Ex. 19:4; Deut. 32:11-12; Matt. 24:16] to flee in the desert for 3 ½ years [Dan. 7:25; 12:7]. God will supernaturally protect and care for the Jewish people. Many Bible scholars believe that the woman [Israel] will flee to Petra.

The earth will be used by God to protect Israel from the flood that Satan brings forth to destroy her. God has used nature to accomplish His will such as the Red Sea [Ex.14:21-22]and the rebellion of Korah [Num. 16:31-33].

Satan's assault on Israel [vs. 15].

In Satan's effort to destroy the Jewish people and dislodge them from their hiding place, he sends a flood. It is another attempt to persecute and exterminate the Jewish people. Satan is once again hindered by God's intervention in Israel's behalf.

THE REMNANT SEED OF ISRAEL

Satan hates God and the nation that brought forth the Messiah. The dragon could not destroy God's people with the flood so now he turns his anger on those who did not flee to God's hiding place in the desert. He now sets his wrath upon those in the Jewish nation who "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Anti-Semitism will reach its peak, and only one-third of the Jewish population will survive this future time of persecution. God has always had a remnant in the past [1 Kings 19:18] and will have a remnant that will survive the Tribulation period who will enter the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 12 is a fitting introduction to the important revelation given in chapter 13 that introduces the last two principal actors in the book of Revelation – the Antichrist and the False Prophet. Along with Satan, they form the unholy trinity that will deceive the world, vying for the souls of men and to turn them away from the true worship of their Creator and Savior. Oh, how things could have been different if only Israel would have accepted Jesus Christ at His first coming [Matt. 23:37-39].