

*According to author and naturalist Craig Childs, in the United States, mountain lions are the number one predator of humans – and he has first-hand knowledge to support his claim. On one occasion, Childs was doing research on the lions in Arizona’s Blue Range Wilderness, and as he approached a water hole from downwind, he spotted a mountain lion drinking water, and it did not appear the lion knew he was there. When the lion finished drinking, it walked slowly away into a cluster of junipers.*

*After a few minutes, Childs walked to the water hole to identify the tracks in the mud and to record notes. Just before he bent down to look closer, he scanned the perimeter, and there among the shadows of the junipers, some 30 feet away, he saw a pair of eyes. He expected the lion to run away, but it walked into the sunlight toward him. Childs pulled his knife and stared into the eyes of the lion. He knew what he had to do, and more importantly, he also knew what he must not do. He writes:*

*“Mountain lions are known to take down animals six, seven, and eight times their size. Their method is to attack from behind, clamp onto the spine at the base of the prey’s skull, and snap the spine. The top few vertebrae are the target, housing respiratory and motor skills that cease instantly when the cord is cut.”*

*Childs said, “I held my ground and did nothing to even suggest that I would back off. If I run, it is certain I will have a mountain lion all over me. If I give it my back, I will only briefly feel its weight on me against the ground as the canine teeth will open my vertebrae without breaking a single bone.”*

*He continued and said, the mountain lion moved to my left, and I turned, keeping my face on it, my knife at my right side. It paced back to my right, trying to get around on my other side, to get behind me, so I turned right, staring at it. My stare was about the only defense I had.*

*The amazing thing is Childs actually maintained that defense as the mountain lion continued to try to provoke him to run, turning left, then right, back and forth again and again, until it came to just ten feet away. Finally, the standoff ended. The lion turned and walked away – defeated by a man who knew what never to do in its presence.*

That’s about as real as it gets when it comes to dealing with a wild predator, and this morning I want to talk about another predator, our predator – Satan. Satan is the predator, the enemy of God’s people because he hates what God loves. All

who love and follow Christ are hated by Satan, and he wants nothing more than to bring despair and destruction and death to us.

At the present time, God prevents Satan from unleashing his full power against the world – his impact is limited by God, but there will come a time when Satan will be permitted, for a season, to run amok, and this morning we are going to get a snapshot of what that looks like during the Tribulation period.

If you recall from last week, we finished **Revelation 11** with the sounding of the seventh trumpet which prompted a great celebration in heaven over the certainty of the coming reign of Jesus Christ upon the earth. It was a joyous scene witnessed by the Apostle John, but now we come to **Chapter 12** where John sees something different – for in his vision, he gets something similar to a biographical sketch – an overview of the main characters involved in this timeless conflict of good versus evil – starting at the beginning of time but most certainly coming to an end.

So, if you have your Bible, turn to **Revelation 12** and we will begin with **verse 1**.

**<sup>1</sup>A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; <sup>2</sup>and she was pregnant and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth.**

Notice that this passage starts with the words “**a great sign**”, which tells us right off the bat that what John sees is symbolic – in fact it underscores the symbolic nature of this entire chapter. If you recall, I have mentioned to you a few times that I tend to take Scripture literally until it becomes obvious that I shouldn’t, and this is one of those times. This chapter is very symbolic in nature, but we must keep in mind that it is symbolic of real things and real events.

So, John goes on and tells us that this great sign in heaven pertains to a **pregnant woman**. Again, this is symbolic – not a literal pregnant woman, and she is clothed with the **sun**, the **moon** is under her feet, and on her head is a **crown** with **twelve stars**, and the question is often asked about this unnamed woman, “**Who does she represent?**” Some have identified the woman as the church, the Roman Catholics say it is Mary, but it’s best to understand this woman as a reference to Israel, and let me explain why.

Turn to **Genesis 37:9-11**. In this passage, Joseph shares something with his father and with his brothers, and it goes like this:

*<sup>9</sup> Then he had yet another dream, and informed his brothers of it, and said, “Behold, I have had yet another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.”<sup>10</sup> He also told it to his father as well as to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, “What is this dream that you have had? Am I and your mother and your brothers actually going to come to bow down to the ground before you?”<sup>11</sup> And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.*

Now, if you remember the story – several years down the road, they do bow down to Joseph, who through a chain of events, eventually becomes the number two guy in all of Egypt, and in this passage, Jacob made it clear that the sun and the moon represent Joseph’s parents and the twelve stars represent the twelve sons of Jacob whose name was later changed to Israel.

Also keep in mind, that it was Israel’s grand purpose to bring forth the promised Messiah – the Savior of the world, and He came into this world under pain – under Roman occupation. Jesus is the Child who came from Israel. Now, as I said earlier, some suggest this woman represents the church, but I don’t believe so because Jesus did not come from the church – the church came from Him, and in regards to Mary, we will see later that it can’t be her either.

So, this pregnant woman is symbolic of Israel, but she’s not alone in this story. Let’s continue with **verse 3** to see who shows up.

**<sup>3</sup> Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven crowns. <sup>4</sup> And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and hurled them to the earth.**

Okay, let’s stop there. Once again, John sees a symbolic **sign** in heaven – this time **a great red dragon**, who is later identified as Satan, and he is the adversary of the woman – he’s the enemy of Israel. John describes this red dragon – Satan as having **seven heads** with **crowns** on them and **ten horns**. This is going to require some explaining – and I’m not copping out here, but since we will see these symbols again and look at them in much greater detail – I’m going to move on.

Now, in **verse 4**, we are given a brief overview of Satan’s story, and we are told that Satan, in his rebellion against God, swept away a **third of the stars** – a third of the angels from heaven. This is the only passage that tells us how many angels fell with Satan. These fallen angels – now demons, revolted with Satan at his fall and they became his servants in his fight against the purposes of God, and as a

consequence, God cast Satan and his fallen angels out of heaven – meaning, they were no longer at home in heaven.

**So, when did this fall of Satan occur?** Let's try to figure it out from this dual prophesy about the king of Tyre and of Satan. In **Ezekiel 28:12-15**, we read:

*<sup>12</sup>“You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. <sup>13</sup> You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the ruby, the topaz and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx and the jasper; the lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; and the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you. On the day that you were created they were prepared. <sup>14</sup> You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. <sup>15</sup> You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you.*

Satan was once a cherub named Lucifer – the highest of angels, but after the creation of the world, Satan became prideful about his beauty and his position and he became rebellious against God, and sometime between creation and **Genesis 3** where Adam and Eve were tempted by him in the garden, Satan must have fallen from his place of authority and power in God's kingdom. So, Satan no longer has a home in heaven – but he's not in hell either. Today, Satan roams and operates in the heavenly realms which are unseen to us.

Now beginning with the last portion of **verse 4**, we are told:

**And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her Child. <sup>5</sup> And she gave birth to a Son, a male, who is going to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her Child was caught up to God and to His throne.**

Satan knows the prophecies about God's plan of redemption. He knows that salvation would only come through Israel's promised Messiah. So, we find him throughout the course of history wanting to destroy Israel and the promised Messiah – that's his goal, and he influenced people in his attempts to carry this out. If you remember, Pharaoh tried to destroy Israel at the Red Sea. King Saul attempted to kill David through whom the Messiah would come. Haman sought to destroy the Jews in Esther's day, King Herod wanted to kill Jesus soon after his birth, and later, Satan thought he had succeeded when he used Judas to betray Jesus and handed Him over to be crucified by Pilate – but we know that didn't work out as Satan had planned, in fact, it totally backfired. Yes, Jesus was

crucified, but He was resurrected from the dead and He ascended into heaven – **caught up to God and to His throne.**

In **verse 5**, one short verse, we are given a compressed history of Jesus Christ where we see His birth and then we skip all the way to His ascension into heaven to prove that Satan completely failed and his fate, his doom, is sealed.

So, we jumped some two thousand years in the past but now we come to **verse 6**, where we blast forward in time by a couple thousand years, completely ignoring the church age because this is not about the church, and we are told,

**Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for 1,260 days.**

Since Satan was unable to kill Jesus, he turns his attention and his anger toward the woman – toward Israel, and in the middle of the seven-year Tribulation period when the Antichrist sets himself up in the temple to be worshipped as God, he will fiercely persecute the Jews and the faithful will flee for their lives and go into hiding. We are not told where they will flee to in the wilderness, but wherever it is, God will protect these Jews during the last three and a half years of the Tribulation period.

Even though Satan has it in for the Jews, God will preserve them and He will fight for them as we see beginning with **verse 7**. John tells us,

**<sup>7</sup> And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, <sup>8</sup> and they did not prevail, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. <sup>9</sup> And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. <sup>10</sup> Then 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 and sisters has been thrown down, the one who accuses them before our God day and night.”**

This is an interesting passage. We are told a **war** breaks out in heaven – apparently Satan’s hatred of Israel will lead him to make one final assault against God, but he will be defeated by **Michael and his angels**. **Why Michael?** Michael is the leader of God’s angelic army and he is assigned to protect Israel. We read about him in **Daniel 12:1**, where we are told,

*Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.*

This is a good place to point out that Satan is not the evil counterpart of God – for God has no counterpart. More accurately, Satan is the evil counterpart of Michael and that’s why they are leading their armies into war.

Satan and his demons are defeated by Michael and his angels, and the end result is, **there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down.** This is not the same thing we read in **verse 4**. **Verse 4** was a past event that occurred between creation and the fall of man where Satan lost his place of authority and power in God’s kingdom, but **verse 9** is a future event where Satan will no longer have access to heaven – he is thrown down out of heaven once and for all, limited to the realm of the earth where he will no longer be permitted in the presence of God to accuse us. Just like we see in the first chapter of **Job**, that’s what Satan currently does now – he tells God how terrible and sinful we are, how unworthy we are of God’s love and mercy and grace and forgiveness – but there will come a time when that all stops. The accuser will no longer be permitted in heaven to accuse us.

In **verse 11**, we are told the believers had an answer for their accuser.

**“And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.”**

**What was their answer to the accusations of Satan?** It’s the same as ours. They trusted Jesus. Although unworthy, they knew they were made right with a holy God because of the finished work of Jesus. These believers had a **testimony** – *“My faith is in Jesus Christ, He is my Savior and my Lord,”* and they were willing to give up everything for Jesus – their reputation, their status, their pride, their possessions, and even their own lives for what they believed.

They were victorious over Satan, but the victory of these believers leads to some bittersweet words beginning with **verse 12**:

**“<sup>12</sup> For this reason, rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you with great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.” <sup>13</sup> And when the dragon saw**

**that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. <sup>14</sup> But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time, times, and half a time, away from the presence of the serpent.**

Those in heaven can rejoice for Satan no longer has access there – he can no longer accuse God’s people; however, everyone living on the earth at that time, especially believers, must beware because Satan now moves among them, and he is angrier than ever. He is a sore loser – he knows his time is short, and so he pulls out the stops to persecute and destroy Israel.

But the miraculous hand of God will be upon Israel, and they will receive divine assistance in fleeing from Satan. Some believe that these eagles wings are symbolic of America and our country will serve as a refuge to Israel, but I think that is stretching it a bit. In the Old Testament, eagles’ wings are a reference to God’s protection. For example, in **Exodus 19:4** when God enabled the Jews to escape from Egypt, they were told,

***You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to Myself.***

God often uses this picture to refer to His protection, so we should probably understand this as describing the divine way God will save a remnant of Israel during the Tribulation period.

Okay, let’s look at the last three verses, beginning with **verse 15**.

**<sup>15</sup> And the serpent hurled water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. <sup>16</sup> But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon had hurled out of his mouth. <sup>17</sup> So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.**

Satan retaliates and John tells us that Satan “**poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood.**” The passage indicates that the water is “*like*” a river coming out of his mouth, meaning this is probably a symbolic way of describing Satan’s attempt to destroy the Jews with a flood of hateful and deceptive propaganda. Remember, Satan is the father of lies, and deception is his primary weapon against us.

Fortunately, we are told, **the earth helped the woman, opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth.** The earth opening seems to be another symbol of God's protection of Israel – similar to God's parting of the Red Sea. Maybe this is a way of describing what happens to those who try to pursue Israel.

After having his great wrath thwarted, **the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.**

Satan is now three times a loser. He has failed to destroy Jesus, he has lost the war in heaven, he has been unable to destroy Israel, so his wrath is directed toward the rest of the woman's **children**, and I understand these "children" to be any true believer left on the earth at that time.

As I look back over this chapter, I see a common thread throughout – that being the relentless activities of Satan against God's purposes and against God's people. Satan is a cunning and stealthy predator, and like any wild predator, he stalks his prey, watching us when we do not know he is there. While he stalks us, Satan looks for any sign of spiritual weakness or weariness – anything he can use to his advantage – and he will work overtime to deceive us and make us doubt God's love for us because that is foundational to the gospel. And like a wild predator, Satan also looks for prey that drops out of the herd. He seeks those who are isolated and alone, or just as effective, Satan will get you to think that you're the only one in the world going through what you're going through. Satan works hard to isolate us and separate us by convincing us that no one can understand or relate to our circumstances. It's a lie.

Fortunately for us, we are not alone, and Satan cannot do anything to us apart from God's control. We saw this with **Job** where Satan had to seek permission from God to test him. Satan wanted to attack Job, but he could not touch a hair on Job's head because of God's protection. Now, if you recall the story, Satan did get permission from God to cause calamity in the life of Job – but with limits. God set boundaries that Satan could not cross, and when the testing was over, when the calamity ceased, when the dust finally settled – Job became much better, more knowledgeable, richly blessed, and stronger in the end.

**So, what are we to do?** The Bible tells us to resist Satan, to resist his lies by standing firm in our faith in God, and by taking our stand on the truth of His Word. We resist Satan by knowing the truth and obeying what we know, for it's when we



put the truth into action that the truth becomes real and tangible and practical in our lives. Simply put, we trust God by taking Him at His Word – trusting that what He says is absolutely true no matter our circumstances, no matter how we feel, and no matter the lies that Satan whispers in our ears. Satan, the father of lies, cannot overcome the truth nor those who live by it.

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