

War in Heaven
Revelation 12:7-12
Dr. Steven R. Hereford

INTRODUCTION

1. This morning we have the privilege of looking once again at Revelation chapter 12.
2. Please take your Bibles and turn with me to Revelation chapter 12.
3. In our last time together we looked at *A Prelude for War* which introduced us to the Woman (Israel), the Dragon (Satan) and the male Child (Jesus).
4. These were the two “signs [that] appeared in heaven” (v.1) that John saw.
5. Now were looking at verses 7-12 where we will see *War in Heaven*.
6. Read Revelation 12:7-12.
7. In his book, *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis, wrote, “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight” (p.9).
8. The same is true of the leader of the demons, Satan.

9. He is pleased when people hold any unbiblical view of him, whether they deny his existence or worship him.
10. The devil always seeks to create confusion about his true nature and purposes.
11. In the news this week you might have heard about the Catholic church of Rome offering a university class on Satanism.
12. MSNBC reported, “ROME - Worried about the lure of the devil, a Vatican-linked university on Thursday debuted its latest course offering: a class on Satanism, black magic and exorcism. The class for clergy and seminarians at Rome’s Pontifical Academy “Regina Apostolorum” has arisen from alarm about Satanic practices among young people, especially in Italy.

Climati said concerned parents had been asking for a special course for priests.

The pontifical academy is run by the Legionaries of Christ, a conservative order, and teachers for the class include exorcists and psychiatrists.

In 1999, the Vatican issued its first new guidelines since 1614 for driving out devils, offering cautions to exorcists about taking psychiatric problems into account.

The updated exorcism rite, first issued in Latin and contained in a red, leather-bound book, was a reflection of Pope John Paul II’s efforts to convince the skeptical that the devil is very much in the world. At the time, he gave a series of homilies denouncing the devil as a “cosmic liar and murderer.”

Among the widely accepted signs of possession by the devil are speaking in unknown tongues and demonstrating physical force beyond one's natural capacity" (<http://msnbc.msn.com/id/6985041>).

13. Jesus said in Matthew 12:26, "And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?"
14. Just as the Devil has deceived millions who belong to the Catholic church in their erroneous belief that Mary could not sin because she was the mother of God, so has he deceived others like that of the word-faith movement who, according to Kenneth Copeland, believes that Jesus was some "emaciated, poured out, little, wormy spirit...down in the bottom of that thing [hell]" (Believer's Voice of Victory, program 21, April 1991, quoted by Hank Hanegraaff in Christianity in Crisis, p.383).
15. The Bible exposes Satan's devious and deceitful nature as the "father of lies" (John 8:44), cautioning that he "disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14; cf. 2 Cor. 11:3) so that he can more easily deceive people.
16. The apostle Paul expressed his concern "that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes" (2 Cor. 2:11).
17. In Ephesians 6:11 Paul said to "Put on the full armor of God so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil" (Eph. 6:11, NASB).
18. One of the most pervasive and persistent popular myths about Satan pictures him (complete with pitchfork, horns, and pointed tail) as being in charge of hell.

19. In reality, Satan is not in hell; in fact, he has never been there. He will not be sentenced to the lake of fire until after his final rebellion is crushed at the end of the Millennium (20:7-10).
20. And when he does enter hell, Satan will not be in charge; he will be the lowest inmate there, the one undergoing the most horrible punishment ever inflicted on any created being.
21. Far from being in hell, Satan currently divides his time between roaming the earth "seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8) and being in heaven, where he also engages in his doomed attempt to overthrow God's Person, purposes, plans, and people.
22. One way he seeks to do that is by constantly accusing believers before God's throne (cf. 12:10).
23. As part of their war against God, Satan and his demon hosts also battle the holy angels.
24. That is not surprising, since Scripture describes the devil as "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph.2:2), as well as "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).
25. His theater of operations includes both the heavens and the earth and his war is fought at every conceivable level – moral, ideological, philosophical, theological, and supernatural.
26. His battle plan for the earthly phase is to eliminate all those who serve God.
27. If he could, he would kill them all.
28. If not that, he would destroy their faith, if that were possible.

29. Satan is a defeated foe and his evil plans will not succeed.
30. Anticipating His victory over Satan at the Cross, Jesus said in John 12:31, “Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out” (NASB).
31. To the Romans Paul wrote, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet” (Rom.16:20 NASB).
32. The writer of Hebrews declared that through His death Jesus rendered “powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb.2:14 NASB).
33. Though Satan was defeated at the Cross, his sentence has not yet been fully carried out.
34. And though he understands his destiny as revealed in Scripture, he nevertheless relentlessly continues to fight his losing battle against God.
35. The war of the ages will continue until Satan is incarcerated temporarily in the abyss (20:1-3) and then permanently in hell (20:10).
36. As we look at Revelation 12:7-12, we see the battle, the victory and the celebration.
37. Notice in verses 7-8 *the battle*.

I. The Signs in Heaven (vv.1-6)

II. The Battle (vv.7-8)

A. Its Place (v.7a)

“And war broke out in heaven.”

1. There has been war in heaven since the fall of Satan

a) Isa.14:12-14 - ““How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’”

b) Ezek.28:15-16 - “You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you. “By the abundance of your trading You became filled with violence within, And you sinned; Therefore I cast you as a profane thing Out of the mountain of God; And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the fiery stones.”

2. At the present time, Satan still has access to God’s presence in heaven

a) We know that from the account found in Job 1 and 2

- (1) Job 1:6 - “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.”
- (2) Job 2:1 - “Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord.”

b) We also know that because of his titles

- (1) Presently he is “the god of this world’ (2 Cor.4:4) and “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph.2:2)
- (2) His demon hosts are also referred to as “spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph.6:12)

B. Its Participants (v.7b)

1. Michael and his angels

- a) “Michael” means “Who is like God?” (Wiersbe)

Daniel 10:13 refers to him as the “chief prince,” while Jude 1:9 refers to him as “an archangel.” Daniel 12:1 says that Michael watches over Israel.

- b) “His angels” are the holy angels who resisted the rebellion with Satan and a third of the angels

2. The dragon and his angels

- a) Verse 9 identifies “the great dragon” as “that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world.”
- b) The demons, as we discussed last week from verse 4, they were the “stars of heaven” who were dragged with Satan in his rebellion

According to Jude 6 they were not forced in this rebellion with Satan but went of their own accord.

They “did not keep their proper domain, but left their own habitation.”

“Keep” Gr.tereo, “to guard.” “The verb expresses the act of watchful care. That is, these angels did not fulfil their obligation of carefully guarding and maintaining their original position in which they were created, but transgressed those limits to invade territory which was foreign to them, namely, the human race” (Kenneth Wuest, Word Studies in the Greek NT).

“Habitation” means, “a dwelling place,” here, heaven.

“Their own” is idion and means, “one’s own private, personal, unique possession.”

Jude says they “left” this.

“Left” Gr.apoleipo with the prefixed

preposition, apo, makes the compound verb mean “to leave behind.”

“These angels left heaven behind. That is, they had abandoned heaven. They were done with it forever. The verb is aorist tense which refers to a once-for-all act” (Kenneth Wuest, Word Studies in the Greek NT).

C. Its Peril (vv.7b-8)

1. They both “fought”

- a) “Fought” occurs twice in verse 7
- b) “Fought” Gr.polemeo (verb), “to make war” (NASB Dictionary)

The noun polemos also occurs in verse 7 and is translated here “war”

The grammatical construction of this text in the Greek “indicates that Satan (the dragon) will start this battle. It could be translated “Michael and his angels had to fight the dragon” (MacArthur).

The Bible does not reveal how angels fight, nor does our limited knowledge of the heavenly realm permit us to speculate.

Henry Morris wrote: “With what weapons and by what tactics this heavenly warfare will be waged is beyond our understanding. Angels cannot be injured or slain with earthly weapons, and such physical forces as we know about are not able to move spiritual beings. But these beings do operate in a physical universe, so there must exist

powerful physico-spiritual energies of which we yet can have only vague intimations, energies which can propel angelic bodies at superluminary velocities through space and which can move mountains and change planetary orbits. It is with such energies and powers that this heavenly battle will be waged and the spectators in heaven (including John) will watch in awe. When Michael finally prevails, and Satan is forced forever out of the heavens, a tremendous cry of thanksgiving will resound through the heavens” (The Revelation Record [Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale, 1983], 224).

2. Satan (the dragon) and his demons “did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer” (v.8)

- (1) They “did not prevail”

“Prevail” Gr.ischuo, means, “to be strong, able.”

They “were not strong enough” to prevail over Michael and his angels.

“All of Satan’s attempts to oppose God throughout history have failed, and he will lose this final angelic battle as well. The devil and his angels are not strong enough to defeat God, Michael, and the holy angels. Satan will suffer such a complete defeat that there will no longer be a place for him and his demon hosts in heaven” (John MacArthur, Revelation 12-22, p.18).

- (2) There “was a place found for them in heaven no longer”

“Every inch of heaven, as it were, will be thoroughly scoured and all the rebellious fallen angels permanently cast out. They will no longer have access to God’s presence, and Satan will never again accuse believers before God’s throne. This defeat will also mark the end of Satan’s reign as ‘the prince of the power of the air’ (Eph.2:2)” (John MacArthur, Revelation 12-22, p.18).

John MacArthur says, “...heaven’s cleansing is earth’s pollution, as Satan’s full fury explodes on humanity when he is cast to the earth” (p.18).

III. The Victory (v.9)

A. Satan is Permanently Cast Out of Heaven (v.9a)

1. This came as a result of his defeat with Michael and his angels

“So the great dragon was cast out...he was cast to the earth”

2. This describes Satan’s second and permanent expulsion from heaven

John identifies “the great dragon” by a four-fold description in verse 9:

- a) “Serpent of old”

- (1) Also occurs in Rev.20:2
- (2) Identifying him as “the serpent of old” refers to him “in the Garden of Eden” (Gen.3:1ff) and emphasizes his subtlety and treachery

b) “the Devil”

Gr.diabolos, means, “slanderer,” “defamer,” or “false accuser”

Satan “accuses men to God, God to men, and men to other men. Satan is a malicious prosecutor of God’s people, constantly trying to arraign them before the bar of God’s holy justice” (John MacArthur, Revelation 12-22, p.19).

c) “Satan”

Gr.satanas, “adversary”

This is a proper name for the enemy of God and God’s people.

“Tragically, the most glorious created being, the ‘star of the morning’ (Isa.14:12), is now and forever branded ‘the adversary.’ He assaulted God in his original rebellion when he demanded to be ‘like the Most High’ (Isa.14:14), and he deceitfully led Eve into sin by manipulating her to distrust the character and word of God (Gen.3:2-5)” (John MacArthur, Revelation 12-22, p.19).

d) One who “deceives the whole world”

“Deceives” Gr.planao, “to lead astray, to mislead, or to deceive.”

It is used in the present tense and “indicates that this is Satan’s habitual, continual activity” (MacArthur).

B. Satan is Cast to the Earth and His Angels Were Cast Out With Him (v.9b)

As they were cast out of heaven with Satan at his original rebellion (12:4), so also will his angels be thrown down with him after his final expulsion from heaven” (MacArthur).

IV. The Celebration (vv.10-12)

A. The Defeat of Satan and His Demon Hosts and Their Expulsion from Heaven Triggers An Outburst of Praise (v.10)

1. This is not the first time John hears a “loud voice”
 - a) In 5:2, he heard a “strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?’”
 - b) In 5:11-12, he heard “the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

- c) In 6:10, he heard the voice of the martyrs who were under the altar crying with “a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’”
 - d) In 7:1-3, he heard the voice of the angel that ascended from the east, “having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, ‘Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.’”
 - e) In 8:13, he heard the voice of the angel who flew through the midst of heaven saying, ‘Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!’”
 - f) In 10:3, he heard another might angel cry “with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. And when he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices.”
 - g) And now in 12:10 he hears another voice.
2. The identity of the “loud voice” is not stated but the use of the pronoun “our” with “God” indicates that this is the redeemed, glorified saints in heaven (cf.7:9-10)
- a) These are the saints that suddenly appeared in heaven that “no one could number, of all

nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands” (7:9).

- b) They cannot be angels because angels do not refer to humans as their brethren and there is no redemption for angels otherwise Satan and his angels could be redeemed

B. The Saints Began Rejoicing that the Salvation, and the Power, and the Kingdom of Our God and the Authority of His Christ Have Come (v.10)

- 1. “Salvation” is to be understood in its broadest sense as encompassing not only the redemption of individual believers but also the deliverance of all creation from sin’s curse and the power of Satan

Romans 8:19-22 - “For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.”

- 2. “Strength” or “power” speaks of God’s omnipotence, His triumphant, sovereign power that crushes all opposition and will establish His kingdom (11:15)
- 3. They rejoiced further that the “power” or

“authority” of “His Christ have come”

“So certain is the establishing of the kingdom and the rule of Christ that, though yet future, they are spoken of in the past tense. The heavenly worshipers rejoice that the first step, Satan’s defeat and final ejection from heaven, has already taken place. They know that, having been expelled from heaven to earth into the abyss (20:1-3), and then from the abyss into his ultimate destination – the lake of fire (20:10)” (John MacArthur, Revelation 12-22, p.21).

- C. Now John or Another Voice States How the Redeemed, Glorified Saints Overcame Satan and Calls for All of Heaven to Rejoice (vv.11-12)
1. They “overcame him by the blood of the Lamb” (v.11a)
 - a) In 7:14 it says that those “who come out of the great tribulation,...washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”
 - b) 1 Peter 1:18-19 says, “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”
 2. They also overcame Satan “by the word of their testimony” (v.11b)

- a) Just as those who were martyred under the fifth seal “for the word of God and for the testimony which they held” (6:9), so these saints overcame them by their “testimony.”
 - b) Verse 17 identifies the persecuted Jewish believers that Satan makes “war with” as those who “keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”
3. They “did not love their lives to the death”
- a) Their faithfulness extended all the way to death
 - b) They willingly paid the ultimate price for their loyalty to Christ
 - c) They like Paul said they “do not count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).
4. The passage concludes with a final note of praise (v.12)

“For this reason, because of the defeat of Satan and the triumph of the saints, the heavenly chorus calls on the heavens and all who dwell in them to rejoice.

That joyous note is followed by the sobering warning "Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great

wrath, knowing that he has only a short time."

Thumos (wrath) refers to a violent outburst of rage. The word depicts a turbulent, emotional fury rather than a rational anger.

John Phillips wrote, "Satan is now like a caged lion, enraged beyond words by the limitations now placed upon his freedom. He picks himself up from the dust of the earth, shakes his fist at the sky, and glares around, choking with fury for ways to vent his hatred and his spite upon humankind" (Exploring Revelation, rev. ed. [Chicago: Moody, 1987; reprint, Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux, 1991], 160).

Satan's rage is all the more violent because he knows that he has only a short time.

CONCLUSION

1. Heaven is now cleansed of Satan and his angels.
2. All of heaven rejoices!
3. Now the persecution of Israel will begin to intensify because of the wrath of Satan.
4. There is one more war that John mentions found in verses 14-17.
5. We'll look at that next time as we conclude this chapter.