

The Glory of Christ Over Satan (Revelation 11:15-12:17)

‘The body they may kill; God's truth abideth still; His kingdom is forever.’
 Martin Luther wrote that song that really paraphrases or pictures Rev 11-12. The witnesses for Christ have their bodies killed in this scene, but the truth of the gospel can't be killed, the dead in Christ rise, the kingdom comes, the kingdom that's forever. In Rev 11:15 choirs in heaven sing with loud voices

*The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom
 of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever.*

‘In a small London house on Brook Street, a servant sighs with resignation as he arranges a tray full of food he assumes will not be eaten. For more than a week, he has faithfully continued to wait on his employer, an eccentric composer, who spends hour after hour isolated in his room. Morning, noon, and evening the servant delivers appealing meals to the composer and returns later to find the bowls and platters largely untouched. Once again [he goes] through the same routine, muttering under his breath about how oddly temperamental musicians can be. As he swings open the door to the composer's room, the servant stops in his tracks. The startled composer, tears streaming down his face, turns to his servant and cries out, “I did think I did see all Heaven before me, and the great God Himself.”...

One writer has stated that [the message of the musical piece he had just finished] “has probably done more to convince thousands of mankind that there is a God about us than all the theological works ever written.”
 ... [the musician had finished composing] 260 pages of manuscript ... in the remarkable short time of 24 days. [He] never left his house for those three weeks. A friend who visited him as he composed found him sobbing with intense emotions ... [A year later in 1743, the King of England heard the composition, and to the surprise of the audience, at a certain point in the concert] the king rose. Following the royal protocol, the entire audience stood too, initiating a tradition that has lasted more than [270 years] ... When [famed composer Joseph Haydn later heard that part of the chorus it was said] he wept like a child, and exclaimed, “He is the master of us all!”¹

The masterpiece was a piece about the Master, Jesus. It's called “Messiah.” The composer's name was Frederick Handel. What was it that drove Haydn to tears and moved the King of Great Britain to stand in reverence? It was at that very same part of the piece a stunned servant in a small Brook St. house had walked in on Handel to find him weeping, thinking he'd seen heaven before him and its great God, the same passage before us today, Rev 11:15.

Please stand in honor of Christ: *The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.*

<this is how Handel set that verse to music - **PLAY CLIP HERE**>

11:15: *Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”* [this is when the kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven, finally, fully, a forever reign of Christ]¹⁶ *And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God,*¹⁷ *saying, “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign.”*¹⁸ *The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants ...*

This is the consummation of the kingdom, the conclusion of God's wrath in v. 18, the dead rise for judgment, saints are rewarded, destroyers destroyed. This is the scene that moved Handel to write ‘Hallelujah! King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And He shall reign forever and ever. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!’ You can sit down but I pray our hearts will stay lifted up as we meditate on God's enemies thrown down and heaven's elders falling down in worship.

Look at Rev 12:5 for an earlier aspect of Christ's kingdom: *She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne,*⁶ *and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.*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.*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.*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...[Hallelujah!]*

This is what Gen 3:15 and the old Battle Hymn of the Republic is about:

‘Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his heel,
Since God is marching on. Glory, glory, Hallelujah...’²

The message of Revelation unveils or reveals the glory of the coming of the Lord whose truth marches on from NT time to the end of time. It pulls back the veil on spiritual warfare, how things really are behind this physical veil, and it unveils a glorious victorious sovereign Lord the devil is no match for.

This is a cosmic drama with 3 parts that show the glory of King Jesus over Satan in past, present, and future, which should move us to join His victory.

1. At His Coming - past images (12:1-5)
2. At His Cross - present applications (12:5-11)
3. At His Coming Again - future grace (12:12-17, 11:15-19)

Rev 12 is called the most symbolic chapter in the Bible's most symbolic book. It's clear what the dragon or serpent symbolizes: the deceiver Satan or aka the devil. Why? v. 9 explains that symbol. It's clear the central character in v. 5 is Christ, the central character of Scripture, history, the universe. He is that male child born of woman to rule nations who went up to His throne in heaven. He will come again as King of the kingdom that will replace the kingdom of this world that's Satan's domain. King Jesus shall reign forever. Rev 12 shows us past images and future realities with present applications.

First, Christ is glorified over Satan in His Coming, His 1st coming (12:1-5)

¹ *And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.* ² *She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth.*

This sign or symbol would not be lost on John who grew up reading the OT about his forefathers in Genesis. Joseph had a dream³ of sun and moon with 12 stars that represented Israel's family; mother, father Israel, 12 sons/tribes. Israel many times in the OT prophets is pictured as a woman and my Study Bible says this on v. 2: 'Israel, often pictured as a mother giving birth (cf. Isa 26:17, 18; 54:1; 66:7-12; Hos.13:13; Mic. 4:10; 5:2, 3; Matt. 24:8), had agonized and suffered for centuries, longing for the Messiah to come and destroy Satan, sin, and death, and usher in the kingdom.'⁴ Earlier in Genesis, before Israel was even a nation, God promised Eve that there would be birth pains in pregnancy and agony in giving birth, but that a male child born of woman would one day crush the serpent's head. So you could argue v. 2 is a picture of all OT believers since Eve who looked forward to that promise in faith, faithful Israel and those sharing the faith of Israel looking to Messiah.

Now in v. 3 enter the dragon: *And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with 7 heads and 10 horns, and on his heads 7 diadems.*

- 'heaven' is his origin, Satan was originally a good angel in heaven
- 'red' may speak of blood, war; he's 'a murderer from the beginning'
- 'horns' is a biblical symbol for strength, military might. 7 heads and 7 crowns may signify fullness of authority and rule within his realm

Satan *is* powerful. 'Still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe; his craft and power are great, and armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal.'⁵

⁴ *His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it.* ⁵ *She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron ...*

It's possible v. 4 is still talking about the time of Genesis when other angels rebelled, left heaven, and came to earth following Satan (Gen 6, pre-Gen 3), or it may jump forward to a time closer to the birth of Christ in v. 5 like Dan 8:10 where it uses this same imagery of one who would later attack Israel: *'to the host of heaven [it] caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down.* ¹¹ *It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down (8:10-11 NAS)*

I think all agree that's a prophecy of Antiochus Epiphanes before the time of Jesus trampling and defiling the Jewish temple for 2,300 days, and so it may be Rev 12 draws on that language to say Satan was ultimately behind that in seeking to destroy Israel (the stars of Joseph's dream but he couldn't destroy all of them). Satan is behind efforts to wipe out Israel from Pharaoh killing babies to Herod to Haman to Hitler to Hamas. Rev 12 may be like Isa 14:12 where God speaks to a king of Babylon as Lucifer. Rev 12:4 may be rooted in Satan's fall long ago but similar language is used of what Satan has done in history, in Antiochus, Babylon's king, and another king in the end of v. 4.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, which king tried to destroy the child? King Herod heard of a king born so sent his soldier to kill all male children. Matthew 2 tells that story but Rev 12 is the rest of the story in the spiritual realm: behind that was actually a malevolent evil dragon seeking to devour.

Some of you kids know the story of maleficent who came to curse the royal child born. The child was destined to die, under a curse, and later a spell is cast over all the people in the kingdom, a sleep like death. Maleficent stood as a great dragon, even in the Disney version she calls down the powers of hell, but a prince slays the dragon, reverses the curse, and rescues his bride. Rev 12 is the true story of stories, Hero of heroes: Jesus became a curse for us to rescue His bride from the curse of death, defeating Satan (Rev 19-20).

This picture is not like a cartoon, though, it's more like a horror movie. It's a visual of a delivery room, a woman with her legs up in that most vulnerable position, but there's no doctor at the end of the birth canal, it's a dragon with 7 heads waiting to devour the baby. It's a horrifying hideous serpent in v. 9.

Ever since Gen 3:15 the promise of enmity between the serpent and woman and God born in human form to kill the serpent, it's retold in many cultures:

- In ancient Egypt a mother pregnant with a god is pursued by a red dragon
- In Canaanite myth Baal slays a 7-headed serpent and sets up his kingdom
- The Mesopotamian god Marduk was said to have killed a 7-headed dragon named Tiamat and thrown down a third of the stars after earth was created
- Closest to home to when John writes Rev 12, in Greco-Roman mythology, a serpent tries to kill Hercules when he was born but later he kills a dragon. Or a woman pregnant with the god Apollo is pursued by the dragon Python and after Apollo is born he slays Python. Nero claimed to be the god Apollo

But in Rev 12 John sees the true God, the Emperor of the universe, born in human form to crush the serpent's head as Gen 3:15 promised, the real truth later stories are cheap knock-offs of. One writes: 'the NT "demythologizes" Greco-Roman myth by historicizing it. What the pagans longed for in their [stories] has now...come true in Jesus. Therefore the form is both deliberate and brilliant, using what in our time has been called a "redemptive analogy" to present the gospel in such a way to capture the interest and hearts of the non-Christian reader.'⁶ A baby is no match for a giant 7-headed dragon, but the end of v. 5 says this child was caught up to God and to His throne. This skips forward 30+ years to His victory over Satan and ascension to heaven. And v. 6 may skip forward at least 30+ years to when believing Israel fled to the wilderness and was protected by God in those days from Nero's rage, or some think it skips farther ahead to the end (v. 14 comes back to it later).

Before the end we see **#2. Christ's glory over Satan at His cross (v. 5-11)**
 v. 5 ends with Christ caught up to His throne after His victory at the cross, as Colossians 2:14 says He took away at the cross what '*was against us and that stood opposed to us...having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross*' (NIV)

[Jesus triumphed over Satanic powers and authorities at the cross]

1 Peter 3 seems to say at Christ's resurrection He proclaimed victory to the spiritual realm, to fallen angels who lost their place in heaven (v. 18-20) and Peter says He '*has gone into heaven...with angels...subjected to him*' (v. 22). It may be Rev 12:8 is describing the implications of that event up in heaven.

Some think this is at the beginning of history, the original fall, others think it's at the end of history when Christ's victory is finalized. My thinking is it may be rooted in the center of history, the cross. Of course, the implications of that victory have a final consummation at the end (just like His kingdom is inaugurated but won't be consummated till later), but the reality is begun.

¹⁰ *And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation...[when did that come? At the cross]...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. ¹¹ And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb ...*

[this can't be the final kingdom as Satan is still persecuting in v. 12-17]

Where and when was the blood of the Lamb shed? At the cross. Jesus in His earthly ministry said He saw Satan fall from heaven (Lk 10:18) and He said as He cast out demons '*the kingdom has come*' (11:20, an initial inaugurated kingdom). His victory over Satan began in the wilderness temptation but it was completed at the cross, and Christ provides for our temptations in the wilderness the same victory, v. 11 '*by the blood of the Lamb*' i.e. at the cross

[Satan isn't Christ's *competition*, Satan is Christ's *conquered* enemy]

As John wrote of Satan being *cast out* in judgment here in v. 10 John could remember writing in his gospel what Jesus said right before He went to the cross: *Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out* (12:31). Same word *world* from v. 9, and *now* from v. 10 and same root word for casting out. Jesus said *now at the cross Satan will be cast out*. Right before that He prayed: "*Father, glorify your name.*" *Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."* (v. 28). At the cross the Lord is glorified by His victory over Satan, casting him out. At His ascension Jesus is glorified as our Advocate replacing our accuser.

[there's a real kingdom, conquering, and casting out of Satan now]

This is the application the same author gives in 1 John 2:1 '*if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins...*' [that means a legal satisfaction, no accusation can stand before God the Judge, and Christ our Advocate is always there]

[do you know Jesus by faith in this way? Do you trust His blood alone?]

Since He was victorious over Satan, all in Christ have a glorious Advocate. How does that application work itself out in real life as you struggle in sin? Preach this gospel to your soul: 'When Satan tempts me to despair, and tells me of my guilt within, upward I look and see Him there who made an end to all my sin Because the sinless Savior died, my sinful soul is counted free, for God the Just [or 'the Righteous'] is satisfied to look on Him [Christ my substitute] and pardon me!'⁷

In the OT, Satan is seen coming to heaven to accuse the brethren (Job 1-2). In Zech 3:1 the prophet sees Satan standing at God's right hand to accuse. But after the cross and ascension Satan is never again seen at the right hand of God, he's now cast out and the NT presents Jesus now at that place at the right hand of the Father, sitting with His enemies cast down under His feet. Satan has no standing in court as an accuser because our Advocate is there!

Romans 8: *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...If God is for us, who can be against us?...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 ... we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

Hallelujah! And this takes us to the Hallelujah chorus we began with, from inauguration to consummation, Christ's 3rd final glory is: **His coming again**

In v. 12 heaven's citizens are called to rejoice but earth is warned that Satan is very angry he's been cast down, knowing his time is short. He already lost the war but he wants to take as many people down with him as he can like a Kamikaze pilot at Pearl Harbor trying to take others down with the ship. Or think of the big D-Day victory in WWII but still skirmishes continued. Or think of movies where the bad guys can't win and can't defeat the good guy so what do they do? They go after his family to try to get to him in that way.

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. [I talked about time in Revelation last time and spent probably more time than profitable explaining from Daniel and I don't want to take time today except to say I think this takes us to end times]*

If you're hoping I'll explain the wings of the great evil mean a United States air force transport of Israel to Petra, my apologies to Hal Lindsey fans. This is from Ex 19:4 (God not America) but His people, Jew or Gentile, need His protection. He will keep to the end and none can snatch out His hand, Jn 10.

God protected Israel in the wilderness from Egypt's armies pursuing them into the wilderness like v. 13. Ps 74:13 poetically recalls the red sea victory by God '*You divided the sea by Your strength; You broke the heads of the sea serpents* [NKJV, old KJV 'dragons']. *You broke the heads of Leviathan* [another word for a great serpent ancient people sometimes pictured having many heads, but in Ps 74 it's a picture of Pharaoh's satanically driven forces and the Lord's victory over them poetically is crushing the serpent's heads]

[so in OT imagery the idea is an enemy's deadly defeat]

Then Ps 74:14 talks about God nourishing His people in the wilderness like v. 14 here, for a time, and then the Psalm mentions God controlling floods and drying up mighty rivers in v. 15, which is also like Rev 12 and v. 15:

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 came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth.* 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.*

This is a past image that points to future realities but has present application to all times, not just end times. There's been a war between the offspring of the woman and serpent-dragon since Gen 3:15, a text using the very same words. It's been manifested in Pharaohs and will be in future persecutors of God's people, but just as God protected and provided for His people through the wilderness in Exodus, and with Elijah for 3 1/2 years in the wilderness, and the Jewish church in the wilderness of Pella the same amount of time in John's lifetime,⁸ John sees God will do that for His people to the end of time

Isa 43: '*everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory... I will be with you...**through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you**...you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you...Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring...I will make a way in the wilderness*'⁹

Isa 26-27 says at the last day, the day of resurrection and wrath (26:19-21), '*In that day the Lord...will punish...the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon...*' (27:1). How does that apply to the church? Paul tells the church at Rome '*God...will soon crush Satan under your feet*' (Rom 16:20). Satan is a conquered and soon to be crushed foe under our feet, so let's walk in victory

[feet fitted with the gospel can withstand Satan's warfare in Eph 6]

Satan's wrath and power may be great as Luther said but in Rev 11:18 at the 2nd coming a greater wrath and power is coming, Christ. At the 1st coming, when Jesus died an earthquake opened the temple veil to the holy of holies.

John sees in 11:19 at the 2nd coming another earthquake and the heavenly temple opened, a heavenly ark. In the OT before the ark false gods bowed like Dagon, walls fell down like Jericho, enemies were cast down in battle. That's the picture here. Victory, a mercy seat, heaven's holy presence open.

It says in v. 15 this is at the 7th and final trumpet, the time of kingdom reign in v. 17 and the time of resurrection in v. 18 when destroyers are destroyed. 1 Cor 15 says at the last trumpet, the time of rapture and resurrection, Jesus will reign in His kingdom till He destroys every enemy under His feet, and the last enemy to be destroyed is death (v. 21-26, 51-52). The application? *Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*

It's not just Jews in last days or Jesus in Herod's day Rev 11-12 applies to. Rev 12:5 says Satan wanted to devour the Son of God but 1 Pet 5:8 says he wants to devour every child of God as he prowls around *seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing...the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.* James 4 says '*Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*' Luther concludes this best:

His rage [in v. 12] we can endure for lo his doom is sure. One little word shall fell him
 ... And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us [like v. 17],
 we will not fear, for God hath willed his truth to triumph through us [like v. 11].
 [But] Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing,
 were not the right man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing.
 Dost ask who that may be? [He's in v. 5] Christ Jesus, it is He;
 Lord Sabaoth [Lord of armies], His name, from age to age the same,
 and He must win the battle. [He's won the war so we can win battles in Him]

And Lord haste the day when this world's kingdom becomes the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He shall reign forever and ever, hallelujah

¹ Adapted from Patrick Kavanaugh, *Spiritual Lives of the Great Composers* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996, p. 27) and <http://www.thebiblechristian.com/?p=8390>

² Julia Ward Howe, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

³ Genesis 37:9-11.

⁴ *MacArthur Study Bible*, 1997.

⁵ Martin Luther, "A Mighty Fortress."

⁶ Grant Osborne, *Revelation: Baker Exegetical Commentary*, p. 454.

⁷ Charitie Lees Bancroft, "Before the Throne of God Above."

⁸ For 3 ½ years before 70 AD when Jerusalem was under siege (based on Eusebius, Lk 21)

⁹ Isaiah 43:7, 2, 4-5, 19.