

# A Battle for the Ages

*3-Year Bible Reading Plan*

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**Bible Text:** Revelation 12:1-12  
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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the very last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation, specifically chapter 12. Now for those of you that are guests or visitors with us, we are finding our way to the very end of a very long almost three year journey where we as a family of faith have been walking through the scriptures typically one, sometimes two chapters a day, and it is rightfully fitting as we end this almost three year Bible reading plan that we conclude in what we know as the book of Revelation.

Now as you're turning to chapter 12 today, you will notice that much like last week's message, we're not going to deal with all the judgments that are happening on earth. We're not going to talk about the seven seals, the famous beast/antichrist, mark of the beast, what we know as the battle of Armageddon. We're not going to deal with all the judgments and all the things that we typically think about when it comes to the book of Revelation. In fact, today in chapter 12, much like last week's lesson in chapter 7, this is what we call a parenthetical chapter. It's a big fancy word that means out of the order of or out of the chronology of. One of the beautiful things about the book of Revelation is that it is so heavy in content that every now and then the Lord just gives us a deep breath, he allows us to take a deep breath in the midst of all that is happening and he shows us what's happening behind the scenes. And again today we're going to see here in chapter 12 kind of the color commentary, what's happening behind the proverbial curtain in the midst of all the judgments that are happening in the context of the book of Revelation.

Now today, we're going to deal with a subject matter that oftentimes we are familiar with but maybe not have studied as much. It's what we know as spiritual warfare. We're going to talk about today that which I cannot see and ear cannot hear but as we'll discover in just a moment, is actually more of a reality than that which we can see and that which we can hear. And I'm going to begin today by quoting the late, great evangelist Luis Palau who makes this statement, he said if we could see with spiritual eyes for one second, it would scare the hell out of us. Now that's not a crass statement, that's a very theological statement is what that is. If you and I could really see what is happening around us, if you and I could really see the majesty and the glory of who the Lord is, and if we could see the vileness of who the enemy is, then there wouldn't be one of us who would consciously, purposefully rebel against the Lord.

So today as we come to Revelation 12, we are going to kind of pull ourselves out of the chronology and see what's not only happening behind the scenes in the book of Revelation but as we're going to see in a moment, what's been happening behind the scenes for a very long time. It says,

1 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. 3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. 4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. 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. 6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and sixty days. 7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, 8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. 10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. 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. 12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitors of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

You and I today are introduced and in one of those great portions of the Bible, we're allowed the privilege of seeing what's happening behind the scenes. As we're going to discuss in a moment, behind every struggle, behind every temptation, behind every doubt and behind every fear, what is actually happening behind the scenes? As we walk through this passage and deal with the subject of what we know as spiritual warfare, allow me just to address several items of note. The first one is this, that this chapter in the Bible is very comprehensive, and what I mean by that is it cannot be limited just to that time period that the book of Revelation speaks about specifically as Jesus in Matthew 24 called it, that great tribulation. And even though last week in chapter 7 we got a glimpse of in the midst of the destruction on earth and the realities of heaven, what we discover today is that what we know as spiritual warfare is not limited just to the last days, nor is it limited just to these days, in fact, what we discover is this war, this battle that has been raging has not just been in recent time periods, in fact, we find out, and we'll discuss in more

detail in a moment, that this dragon, this Satan, this devil character who despises anything of God, has been raging and rebelling of him and towards him since time beginning. In fact, the Bible says in Isaiah 14 that there was a day in times past where whom we know as Lucifer now today as Satan and that old dragon, decided that he would rebel against the things and the person of God. We call it the fall of Satan and it happened years and years ago, and we discover that that battle is going to wage up unto the very last moment in time.

When we talk about spiritual warfare, I think one of the biggest struggles we have is thinking that it's somewhat seasonal, it's for this time or for that time or for this area, for that area. We discover that when it comes to spiritual warfare, it is a battle for the ages. It has been happening long before you and I ever stepped foot on planet earth, and barring the return of Jesus Christ, it will continue long after we are past. So when we deal with these issues today, when we deal with this subject matter today, let us not fall into the trap of somehow just relegating it to the last days of the book of Revelation, but realizing it is for all of our days.

That being said, there are some critical personalities, there are some critical characters that are involved in what we just read and I want to focus on three of them. Let's begin with the most primary one, this child that is born, this man-child that brings so much chaos to one of the other characters. It speaks about that there's a woman that travails, longing to give birth unto, that once he arrives on the scene, the dragon desires to devour him, to eliminate him. The Bible says that one day he shall rule the nations but that he was caught up unto the Lord and to sit upon the throne. We could do a lot of debate and discussion but there's really no need for it. This is Jesus, this is who it is. In fact, even though he doesn't "rule the nations" today, he will when you read the end of your Bible toward the end of the book of Revelation, but we do know in Acts 1 that about 40 days after his resurrection, the Bible says that he was caught up unto the heavens. The Bible says there were two angels there that said, "Why do you keep looking upward? Do you not know that in the same manner that he departed, he shall one day return?" So we discover that this one who was caught up, according to the Bible, he sits upon the throne, in fact, in Revelation 6, that famous book that's sealed with seven seals, it says that he on the throne, Jesus Christ, the lion of the tribe of Judah, is the only one worthy to receive it, to take it and to open it. So without question we know that this child is whom we know as Jesus Christ.

So let's talk about this dragon. Well, if you had any question of who he was, go to verse 9. The Bible uses every word you could conceivably use to let you know who this guy is. It says, "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan," four names in one verse. In other words, it doesn't matter if you want to refer to him as the old serpent in Genesis 3, if you want to refer to him as the devil or Satan the accuser, this is who it is. We discover that this one who desires to destroy this child, this one who desires to devour him is the one who the Bible calls the accuser of the brethren, who the Bible calls the one who desires to destroy. This is the one when you read in 1 Peter 5 says he walks around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Let me make it very clear: what we see in this passage is that whom we know as Satan, the devil, the old

serpent, the dragon, I'll use the words interchangeably, he despises anything and everything that is of Jesus Christ and so therefore if we find ourselves as a believer in Jesus Christ, does it not make sense that he would desire to do unto us that which he desires to do unto him? He desires to devour, he desires to consume, he desires to destroy as a roaring lion. Why is this important? Because the last time I checked whether it be the illustration of a lion or the person of Satan himself, he does not come to nibble on our ears, he does not come to whisper sweet nothings, he comes with one purpose and one purpose only, he wants to take you out. He wants to devour you. He wants to destroy you. If he desired that of Jesus Christ himself, wouldn't it make sense that he desires those of us who call on his name?

There's a third character. This is critical to the story and yet there is much debate on who this individual is. It's this famous woman who travails in birth to give unto this child. You go back into verse 1, it says, "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: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered." Now I'm going to share with you what many people believe this person is and then share with you what I think the Bible says who this person is. There are some that think, well, this must be the vessel that the Lord used to bring the incarnation, this must be whom we know as Mary, after all, she was the one who physically travailed, she was the one who the Lord not only conceived within but was allowed to give birth to the Christ child. And even though that sounds good on the surface, the problem is when you get to verse 6 and 7, this character is driven into the wilderness for 1,260 days at some point after the ascension of Jesus and there is no biblical or historical record whatsoever that this ever happened to whom we know as Mary. In fact, much the opposite. While Jesus was on the cross, one of his seven statements, he said, "Woman, behold your son. Son, behold your mother." And we know that whom we know as the Apostle John took care of her, took her to Ephesus to care for her. There is never a time in history where what is applied to this woman could ever be applied to that one particular entity and that completely takes out the account of verses 13 through 16 which most likely have not even occurred yet as far as the chronology of time. There are others that say, well, this woman is the church. The problem with that is then that means the church birthed Jesus and much the opposite is true. Jesus birthed the church.

So who is this woman? You see, this affords me one of those opportunities to share with you how and why we get Revelation so wrong so many times because we often look at it through our eyes and our lens or whatever it may be, but you may be surprised to find out that in 22 chapters of the book of Revelation, there are over 250 either references, allusions to or quotations from the Old Testament. So if you want to get the book of Revelation right, you've got to get your Old Testament right and oftentimes as Bible-believing Baptists, we struggle with the Old Testament. Give us that good old New Testament, right? Guess what? Verse 1 and 2, what you see here about this woman, the stars, the moon, the sun, it's a perfect picture of Genesis 37. Genesis 37, remember Joseph, the great grandson of whom we know as Abraham? The one who had the coat of many colors? The one who was beloved of his family? The one who eventually would deliver them from whom we know as the Pharaoh with the drought and such? Remember

he said, "I had a dream one day," and he talked about what you just read and that his brethren and even his father would bow unto him. Why is that critical to the story? Because that means this woman is the entity that we collectively call Israel, this entity that the Lord initiated with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and eventually the 12 tribes, and would make its way all the way to whom we know as the Christ child, Jesus Christ.

Why is this so important? Because when we talk about spiritual warfare, notice it says that he stood by to devour her. It wasn't just at Bethlehem, church, it was the entire time. Think about all the stories we have of Satan trying to derail the plan of God. You remember a woman in Abraham's life known as Hagar? Remember a woman in David's life by the name of Bathsheba? Remember a king by the name of Jeconiah who was so wretched in his behavior the Lord said, "This is never going to take place in this manner. I'm going to circumvent it with this one." What do we see? From the moment that the Lord called Abram from Ur of the Chaldees, the enemy raised his head and said, "I'm going to do everything I can to thwart this." Why is this important for you and I today? Because when we talk about spiritual warfare, we say I'm dealing with something, I'm struggling with something, I'm battling something, you do realize it didn't begin this weekend, right? In fact, it probably didn't begin this year. In fact, according to what we just read, the enemy knew the plans the Lord has for you, he started decades ago, he started years ago based on your age and stage in life, and what we need to understand is that which may be manifesting in our life, that which may be happening in real time today was actually put into place years and years ago.

When we read this story, we think of that natural situation where Jesus Christ is incarnated and born and we know that the devil put within Herod's mind to destroy all the little boys two years of age and under. You do realize that's not the only time he tried to get rid of him, it's not the only time he tried to devour him. He tried to begin this process with the very first person God called, "If I can get Abraham off track." By the way, you look at the life of Esau and Jacob and it went a little sideways as well. You don't have to go far down the line where you realize his plan to thwart us didn't just start in recent days but has been happening for many many days.

So these characters are critical to us to understand what's happening in real time in our lives. Then we discover there is this conflict with great casualties. You get into verse 4 and it talks about a third of the stars being ripped out of heaven. You get into verse 7, verse 8 and 9, it talks about this great war that is in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the devil, fighting against back and forth and he's kicked out, they're kicked out, all kinds of things happening, and I think this is one of the most difficult things to fit within the chronology today. You see, what we have is a comprehensive analysis of spiritual warfare. This has been happening all the way back not only since the fall of Satan but for our recollection today, at least what we know as the time of Abraham all the way to today, we know that it's been happening not just for decades but for centuries and millennia, and yet at the same time there's this passage about a third of the angels being destroyed with him, this great battle that's taking place, and the reason that it is so difficult is that the overwhelming majority of, if not all of us, have been taught and it has been propagated throughout all of our lives that when Satan thwarted a third of the

angels, it happened at that initial rebellion. That's what we've been taught and the reason most of us have been taught that is because in the book "Paradise Lost," that's what John Milton told us. However, if you'll read the passage, what we know as this famous third of the angels in a chronology of chapter 12 is actually after what we know as the call of Abraham. It's actually after the initiation of God's plan through that specific lineage of whom we know as the person of Jesus Christ. Then you've got this great battle. When does it take place? Is it before? It is after?

What does that all lead to? One of the things I think we need to understand today is when we talk about spiritual warfare, when we talk about the conflict, oftentimes we want to get caught up in the when of the conflict but I want to talk about the what. One third of the angels. One third. Now I want to put this in perspective for you. Not only is that a large number because Hebrews 12 says the number of angels is innumerable to man, so it's a great vast quantity, but I want you to think about it, these are spiritual beings according to Hebrews 1:14 who have known nothing but the glories of God. They've known nothing but the presence of God. They've known nothing but the majesty and the glory of his name. And they fell for it. They took the bait.

Why is that critical? Because we're from the South and there's some of us saying, "Devil, I dare ya. Bring it on." You know, that's one of the worst things you could ever say in your life. In fact, it talks about here this battle between Michael and the archangel, you know in the book of Jude which is that one page book of the Bible before Revelation, it said that Michael was face-to-face with the devil, here they were fighting about something, do you know what Michael does? He says, "Alright, Lord, you take it." Can I give you some insight here? If the angels fell to his devices, and if Michael wasn't willing to fight him face-to-face, how big a fool do you have to be to try it yourself? And yet how many times when it comes to struggles, temptations, battles, addictions, we pull up our proverbial bootstraps and say, "I've got this, God. I've got it." If there's one thing can I beg you to learn from this passage? You don't have it. If the angels fell and if this battle took place with Michael and the archangels, who are we to think somehow, somehow we can do this, we got it? You see, he desires to devour, he desires to destroy, and from time beginning there is a path of carnage. What we need to understand is when it comes to these issues, when it comes to these struggles that we'll speak about more in just a moment, it's not about the strength that we possess, it's about the power that he already has.

The fourth thing is the chronology of time. I want you to go back to verse 5 and 6. This is an important question to ask: where do we fit? I mean, after all, the story begins all the way back in the book of Genesis and if you read through verse 16, it ends at some point days future. That's a large span of time so where are we?

Verse 5 it says, "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." That's the book of Acts 1. "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and sixty days." According to verse 13 and 16, that's a time to come yet in the future. If you were to say where am I in the story, you can place yourself somewhere in the margin between verse 5 and 6.

Why is that important? Because as you look at that time span and what we know as the New Testament, what we know as the letters particularly from the Apostle Paul, every time you have a reference to spiritual warfare, every time there's a passage dealing with an issue like this, it's not written to the lost world, it's written to the believers. Now what I'm about to say may sound harsh but it's very theologically true: if you're not a believer in Jesus Christ, I've got news for you, the devil doesn't care about you. He's already got you. You're already wearing his jersey. You're already on the team. He's not concerned. But if you're a person today who has understood you've got a sin problem and ask Jesus to save you, the devil hates your guts. He despises you as much as he does Jesus and he wants – listen to me – he wants to take you out. So the question is: how do you not get taken out? Look in verse 11, "they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." The only means of victory over trial, temptation, struggle, addiction, heartache, doubt, fear, fill in the blank, is the blood of Jesus Christ. There is nothing you and I can bring to the table that can somehow get victory, only Jesus Christ.

So why, why, church, would we fight with anything else? It says it is the blood of the Lamb. Notice that next statement, "by the word of their testimony." The word of their testimony. You know, I'm going to give you some of the most sound theology in the world. You know, we love to talk about saints. The book of 1 Corinthians talks about the saints there at Corinth, the saints that are at Ephesus, can I tell you what a saint is? A saint is somebody that when they get knocked down just gets back up. So do you know what Satan wants to do in some of your lives? He wants you to quit. He wants you to stop. He wants you to quit getting up. In fact, it says here he wears us out. That is his goal. That is his desire. So when it says the word of their testimony, here's what it's saying, it is the blood of the Lamb and the very fact that Jesus never stopped to quit on me so why would I quit on him?

Notice it says "and they loved not their lives unto death." You know, when we talk about issues such as this, it's so easy to say, "Well, pretty much everything's good but there's this one little area. If I could quantify it out of 100 parts, only one is stray, or maybe only three or four, but overall, I mean, it's going pretty well." You do understand that his purpose is to destroy you, right? And so it's the blood of the Lamb, it's the word of their testimony, they loved not their lives unto death, meaning there was no area of their life that they reserved for themselves. Let me tell you what the book of Ephesians says, "Give no place to the devil." No place. Let me put it in our terminology, if you give him an inch, he'll take a yard. If you crack open the door, he'll kick it open. If you and I want to have any victory, any success in what we know as spiritual warfare, we need to make sure he doesn't have any area of our life, much less just this small area of our life. They overcame, we overcome not only by the blood of Jesus, the word of our testimony, we love not our life unto death which means we give the devil none of it.

So here's the conclusion of the matter. If you were to somehow go back into the book of Revelation, chapter 12 is tucked between chapters 11 and 13. I know that makes mathematical sense but chapter 11 is about two witnesses who the antichrist removes their head for 3 ½ days. Chapter 13 is about the miracle signs and wonder, the famous

mark of the beast. In fact, with all perception, it looks like that the enemy is going to win. I mean, after all, death is reigning, destruction is everywhere, and what little people of faith are running for their lives. What we discover, though, is that no matter how it looks or how it sounds, from the beginning to the end that God always wins the victory. It's just not the way it looks that we would do it.

Some of you have heard we share this before but allow me to share it again. I had the distinct privilege of growing up as a young person in middle school and high school student during the height of the Cold War, during the days where even in middle school I would go to bed listening to the news at night and didn't know if we'd wake up. Some of you remember those days, you remember that all we were fed on the news was we could take them out, they can take us out, one day we're all going to take everybody out. It was the height of those days and as a young teenager, I struggled. I had a hard time going to bed at night. You know, when you think about the destruction of all things, that's hard to take as an adult, much less a young teenager. And I struggled and I struggled and one day I decided to go to my student pastor there at the church my family was a part of, and I just confessed my ills. I said, "Dave, man, I'm struggling here. I'm not sleeping at night. I'm stressed out. All I hear is about this and that. Do you have any words of wisdom?" He said, "Yeah, do you have a Bible?" Now, you know, he had to get the sarcasm too, right? He said, "Do you have a Bible?" I said, "Well, yeah, of course I have one, why?" He said, "Read the book of Revelation. Just go home and read it." I said, "Okay." So here I am, middle schooler, I go home and read the book of Revelation from beginning to end. I get back and he says, "Well, how was it?" And I said, "I don't know." He said, "Tell me what you learned." I said, "Not a thing." He said, "Tell me something about the book of Revelation." I said, "I'll be honest with you, I didn't understand anything." He said, "I figured you wouldn't. But let me ask you one very important question." I said, "What is that?" And he said, "Does the Bible end the way the world tells you it's going to?" I said, "No, sir." He said, "Then what are you worried about? You see, God's going to do it completely different than what you're fearful of, questioning, doubting, concerned, bothered, fill in the blank." He said, "Jeff, let it down and trust that God's got this."

You know, I began today with a quote from the late, great evangelist Luis Palau, shall I end with another one? He said in all of his years, most of the believers that he's gotten to know personally, they quit, gave up, or gave in within one year of God giving them the victory. Can I ask you an honest rhetorical question? Those of you that are struggling today, those of you that are going down a road that is hard, it is difficult, some of you can look in the rearview mirror, it's been three months, some of you it's been three years, some of you it's been three decades and you're on your last, it's at the end and you're thinking to yourself, "I can't resist one more day," you're thinking, "I can't go down this path one more day. I'm just about to throw in the proverbial towel." Let me ask you: how soon is that victory that you don't know about? What would you think if you "quit" a week before God was going to show up? A month before God was going to show up? A year before God was going to show up? You see, when you read the book of Revelation, he always gets the victory and when the devil tells you to quit, you might be as near as you've ever imagined to the victory because he wants to devour you and keep you from experiencing what God has for you.



So maybe today the victory for you is just not quitting. Maybe for you the victory is just getting up tomorrow morning. You know, sometimes getting out of bed and putting your feet on the floor is victory when it comes to what the devil is doing in your life.