

War in Heaven

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Bible Text: Revelation 12:7-12
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Let's open God's word together tonight to Revelation 12. Revelation 12, we're going to read the whole chapter. Our text will be verses 7 through 12. I'm not going to reread those verses again. Revelation 12, we'll begin our reading at verse 1.

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 threescore days.

Now begins our text.

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 inhabitants 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. 13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the

earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. 14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. 15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. 16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. 17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

To that point we read the holy and inspired word of God.

Beloved congregation, Revelation 12 gives us an overview of the entirety of the history of the world from the fall of Adam through the First Coming of Jesus Christ and all the way through to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And it gives us that overview of the history of the world from a very specific point of view, from the point of view of the great battle of the ages, of the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light, of the battle that is the battle between God and Satan.

The first scene of that battle in Revelation 12 is on the earth. The vision opens with a woman who has twelve stars upon her head. This is the church of the Old Testament. The twelve stars represent the twelve tribes of Israel. This woman, the Old Testament church, is pregnant with a man-child and eventually gives birth to a man-child. That man-child is the Lord Jesus Christ who comes out of the Old Testament church.

There appears in this vision then a second piece. This pregnant woman is not alone. There is a great red dragon identified in verse 9 as Satan and the devil. This dragon desires to eat up that man-child. This is the devil in his work through the Old Testament, trying to cut off the line of Jesus Christ so that Christ does not come, and then when that does not work, his attempts to consume Jesus when he is born into the world. Children, you remember that when Jesus was born, Herod, made a command that all the babies two years old and younger in Bethlehem were to be killed. That's part of what this verse in Revelation 12 is talking about. The dragon tries to consume the man-child as soon as he is born. The devil was behind Herod in his attempts to kill Jesus there in Bethlehem and the other attempts to kill the Lord Jesus Christ are part of this too. The times when the Jews tried to kill him or tried to stone him, or the people in Nazareth tried to throw him off of a cliff, that's all part of this dragon trying to consume, devour the man-child.

God in his sovereignty shows that he has power even over the devil and accomplishes his good purpose even using the devil because the final piece of the devil's attempt here to devour this man-child as he comes into the earth, is the cross. He gets him hung upon a cross and there he thinks that he has this man-child devoured and yet that cross turns out to be the victory of the people of God and of the man-child himself as he atones for sin, and then on the third day he rises from the dead. He's not devoured. And then 40 days later, he ascends into heaven. That's what verse 5 is talking about when it says, the man-

child is caught up to God and to his throne. That's the ascension of Christ to heaven. He's caught up into heaven and escapes the grasp of that great red dragon.

And now, as the scene shifts from the earth, follows Christ up into heaven, we get a shock because we find out that when Jesus ascends into heaven, he ascends into the midst of a war that's going on, not on earth, but in heaven. And there was war in heaven. And we learn that this war has been going on throughout the entire Old Testament, this spiritual battle, the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light. We know, we knew and know is going on upon the earth, but here we find out that it's been going on in heaven too. But then as we keep reading, our surprise turns to joy and gratitude as Jesus, particularly in his ascension into heaven, ends that war that had been going on throughout the entire Old Testament, granting another aspect of the victory that he's earned for the people of God.

Let's see that this evening under the theme, "The War in Heaven." Notice first, the war itself; second, the victory; and third, the results. The war in heaven: the war, the victory, and the results. There's a war going on in heaven, and the text says that that war is due to an attack from the devil and his demons.

Verse 7, "Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels." Verse 4 has already told us something about this devil and his angels. We're told there that this great red dragon with his tail drew a third part of the stars of heaven and cast them down to the earth. This is talking about the time when the devil was cast down into hell before the fall of Adam and Eve even, and he took one-third of the angels of heaven with him. Apparently, the devil had started a revolution against God in heaven and against his plan and purposes with Jesus Christ, and Isaiah 14:13 tells us something about that, and apparently, a third of the angels of God joined Lucifer in that revelation in heaven. As punishment, God cast the devil out of his position and cast him to hell and cast those angels who revolted with him down into hell with him so that now these are what's being referred to in verse 7, the dragon and his angels. These are his angels, the demons, the one-third that he has taken with him. However, when the devil was cast out of his position, he did not give up in his revolution against Jehovah God and against his purposes, but has sought to overthrow God and his purposes from then on through the history of the world. He's engaged in this spiritual war against God seeking to overcome God's purposes and accomplish his own purposes and to take God's world and God's people unto himself, and we learn here that though we experience all of that on the earth as he attacks God's people here on the earth, Satan also was able to take that war into heaven itself during the Old Testament period.

Now be careful how you think about that, because just like in this spiritual war on the earth between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light, it's not a war that's primarily physical, so too this war that's going on in heaven is not primarily a physical battle, but a spiritual one. So don't picture Michael and his angels, two-thirds of the angels on one side in heaven, and the devil and a third of the angels, the demons, on the other side, and they have their swords and their spears and their shields, and they're going

to go at it in hand-to-hand combat. According to the text, primarily this war in heaven is a war of words. It's a war of legal wrangling.

The nature of this war is revealed in the song that all heaven sings after the devil and his demons are finally cast out of heaven after the ascension of Christ. Verse 10, "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now has 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." The attack of the devil in this war is an attack of accusation. Having access to heaven before the ascension of Jesus Christ, he comes repeatedly into heaven to make a legal case about something. It's a war of words and that's too why the text supplies the names of the dragon in verse 9, "called Satan and the Devil." The devil means accuser and this is what he is, this is what he does, this is how he attacks. It's part of how he engages in this war, he accuses. And he is Satan, that means manipulator, twister. This is what he does even as he accuses. He manipulates things, doesn't take all the information into account as he accuses.

Before whom is he making this accusation? Before God, "which accused them before our God day and night." God is the judge, and as it were, the devil is the prosecutor, making accusation. Who is he accusing? He's accusing our brethren, "for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them, our brethren, before our God day and night." That is, our brethren, the believers, who have died and in their souls have gone to heaven. The object of attack in this war from the point of view of the devil and his demons is not Michael and his angels in particular; the devil isn't trying, as it were, to get the rest of the two-thirds of the angels and to carry them down to hell with him, but he's after the souls of God's people who are there in heaven. That's the object of his attack, and specifically these brethren who are in heaven, who have died and gone to glory before the ascension of Jesus Christ. We know that because the war ends after Christ ascends into heaven. So whatever the accusation is that he brings, it must only apply to the saints of the Old Testament, and whatever that accusation is, it must have some legal standing before Christ comes in his ascension. If he had absolutely no ground, no basis to make this accusation, God would have kicked him out of heaven. He must have some ability to make this accusation, precisely because it's the Old Testament yet.

So what exactly is the accusation that the devil and his demons are making day and night throughout the Old Testament against our brethren in heaven as the war between darkness and light as it manifests itself there in glory? The only possible conclusion that we can come to is that the devil was in heaven making the accusation against the souls of God's people there that they have no right to be there in glory. They have no legal basis for being present there in heaven. The accusation is made against the saints, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the rest, the remnant in Israel, all of the elect from the Old Testament, that they should have been in hell with the devil. Christ had not come yet, and from the devil's point of view, he is seeking to prevent the coming of Jesus Christ, and he thinks he might be able to do it. And because Christ has not come yet, he argued, "The sins of those souls who are in heaven have not been paid for. They have no legal standing to be in glory. God, you are just, and before the bar of your justice, these sins are not actually atoned for."

No doubt he brought specific accusations, probably brought out the big guns. "There's David. We all know what he did. God, Bathsheba, Uriah, and it hasn't been paid for. There's no covering for it. He has no right to be here. And there's Abraham. How many times did he lie about Sarah being his wife to save his own neck? He has no right to be here. These sins must be held to their account. I have the right to these souls to take them down to hell." So that you see the two scenes of this war in Revelation 12, the spiritual war on earth and this war going on in heaven are part of the one war of darkness versus light. The devil is making a two-pronged attack here against God and his purposes throughout the Old Testament period so that on the one hand he's trying to prevent the coming of Jesus Christ, who he knows in some way is supposed to make satisfaction for the sins and secure the place of these souls in heaven, at the same time, as long as he hasn't come yet on the earth, and I've prevented him as he might think to himself, then part of that attack also is to go into heaven and say, "Look, these souls are not paid for. I have the right to them."

This understanding of the war in heaven is perfectly in line with what we read about a war over the body of Moses in Jude 1:9. Jude 1:9, we're told that Michael, the same angel who is here in Revelation 12 named, Michael is disputing with the devil, disputing with the devil over the body of Moses, and likely the dispute is exactly the same. Michael was taking the body of Moses up to heaven, which is how Moses could appear later in the New Testament on the Mount of Transfiguration along with Elijah, who went to heaven bodily and appeared on that mount of transfiguration. But as he's taking the body of Moses to heaven, the devil comes and disputes with Michael about that body. "This body doesn't have the right to go into heaven. I have the rights over this body." The same thing is happening in our text. This is his attack. This is the war in heaven.

The main mode of attack that the devil has in this spiritual warfare between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light, beloved, is temptation. Temptation. A secondary mode of attack that he has is persecution. But along with those, there is a third, a great weapon that he has in his arsenal. Don't take it for granted, and don't think it next to nothing. Accusation. And not only does he use it here in heaven in Revelation 12, but he uses it here on earth with the people of God too. Have you faced this attack of the evil one? I'm not speaking now to anyone who is outside of Jesus Christ. Your sins are your own and they are held to you and may God give you to break, even under the preaching of the word, and come in repentance and lay those sins down before the foot of the cross to find the only answer in that accusation. But for the saints of God who are here, you know this attack of the evil one upon the church, don't you? And bringing up long ago sins, repented of, forgiven, put to bed, to the mind and to the conscience, maybe even sins of youth. "You don't think that having done this, you have the right to heaven, do you? You don't actually think that I'm not going to have the right to take your soul at the moment of death and to drag you to hell, do you? You have no right to go there in your sins. You've done this, probably other people haven't done that, but you've done it. What makes you think that you could possibly be a child of God? You can't possibly think that those sins were paid for. They're too great. And besides, have you repented enough for

those sins? I don't think you've repented enough. You've cried tears to be sure, but not enough tears. I think you should have cried more. Do you really think you can rest?"

It's a serious attack and astoundingly, here he brings it up to heaven so that these Old Testament saints who are in glory have to hear this. Throughout the Old Testament period, the accusation against their sins, that's an astounding thing. And it's not beyond the realm of possibility that as he makes these accusations, he and his demons make the move forward to try to take these souls out of heaven. "I have the right to them," he says, as he and his hosts move forward to the souls of Isaac and Jacob and the rest. And there it is Michael and his angels who step in to defend the children of God throughout the Old Testament period. Verse 7, "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels." Michael and his angels. Michael is an archangel as Jude 1:9 tells us. That means he was one of the head angels, maybe you could say, a General in the army of the Lord of hosts and he had a host of angels who were under his command.

Apparently, Michael and his angelic forces were tasked by God specifically to guard and to protect the people of God. I say that because everywhere we read of him in the Bible, that's what he's doing. It's he again in Jude 1:9, as we mentioned earlier, who's contending with the devil over the body of Moses. In Daniel 10, you can read that on your own perhaps, he comes to help one of his angels that's under his command, that is fighting over influence with a demon over the Prince of Persia for the sake of protecting the people of God. And then in Daniel 12:1 it says it explicitly, Michael is called the great prince which standeth for the children of God's people. And in line with that rule, then, here it is Michael and his host who defend the people of God in heaven through the Old Testament from this attack of the devil and his host, and while there may have been some forceful prevention of the devil, if he did, we don't know, if he did move forward to try to grasp those souls and take them out of heaven, the defense of Michael and his host was mainly legal, as the attack was mainly legal.

You can imagine Michael answering the devil. "You are not taking into consideration, Devil, the eternal decree of Jehovah God. God has decreed in eternity that these saints would be his. He has chosen them in Jesus Christ from before the foundation of the world, the Christ whom he has appointed to come in the fullness of time and who will come in the fullness of time for his decree is sovereign. It is irresistible. It is irrepressible. Not even you, Devil, can prevent that counsel from being carried out. He will come to the earth and he will attain the righteousness that is needed for these souls to have the right to be in glory. So sure is the advent and the redemptive work of this Christ that he will not be swallowed up by you, Devil, no matter what you do. You will not be able to consume him."

And the devil, of course, caring nothing for this, he thinks these arguments are rubbish and delusional as he is. He thinks he can prevent the counsel of God from coming to pass, and so he argues, "But it hasn't happened yet. And since it hasn't happened in time, actually, they have no right to be here." And Michael responds that, "The promise of God is sure and steadfast, and he promised in Genesis 3:15, that the Christ would come and he

would crush your head, Devil, and he will. God's promise is sure, as sure as his eternal decree. It will come to pass." And the devil says, "We'll see about that. And until it does come to pass, you have no right." And so the battle goes on.

Never does God give up the souls of his people, and if the devil does try to move upon them, Michael and his angels prevent them, and yet he keeps coming back because to a certain extent, not to a full extent, but to a certain extent, the devil has a point. As true as it is that God's counsel is absolutely sure and sovereign and will be accomplished and his promise is a promise that will be carried out, Christ must come in time to pay for the sins of God's people. And therefore, all throughout the Old Testament period, they cannot completely shut the devil's mouth and kick him out of heaven once and for all. That is, until the seed of the woman appears, born of the virgin, accomplishes his work of redemption, just as decreed and just as promised. Until that seed of the woman crushes the devil's head, right when the devil thought that he had a grip upon him and would devour him, taking the wages of our sins upon his own self and atoning for them, bearing the just wrath of God so that he could take them away, and then rising again the third day, the declaration of Jehovah God that those sins are atoned for, they're done, they're gone. Not one ounce of punishment remains, and the right to glory is secured for God's people and until that risen Christ is caught up to heaven as the final piece of that redemptive work and the decisive moment of full victory as the Lord comes into glory in triumph.

Do you remember the Old Testament Day of Atonement feast where the high priest would take his hands and put them on the head of that goat. Two goats there were. One would be sent out to the wilderness. It's a picture of the fact that our sins are taken away from us, removed from us as far as the east is from the west. And the other goat, the picture of how they're taken away from us. The high priest would put his hands on the head of that goat and he'd confess the sins of Israel, transferring them, imputing them in the type to the head of that goat. And then that goat would have his throat slit as the sacrifice and the blood would be drained out. But it wasn't until the high priest took that blood and went into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled it upon the mercy seat that the act was completely finished. And only then could the priest come out and hold his hands over the people and give them God's blessing.

So too in the reality, in the work of Jesus Christ, yes, it is finished, atonement was made on the cross of Jesus Christ once and for all, but it's not until he brings his own self as the sacrifice for sin into glory and to the Holy of Holies that that act comes to its completion and there, the full redemption has come to pass and the devil no longer has a leg to stand on. No ground for any accusation. No basis for any attack. This explains the shouts of triumph in verse 10, when Christ ascends into glory, "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." Can you imagine this scene in heaven when Jesus Christ ascended, when that cloud that took him up into heaven docked, as it were, into glory, and he got off and went into heaven, paraded by thousands upon thousands of angels and the Old Testament saints, as he took his place at the right hand of God to the shouts of triumph and praise. And then when he sits upon his throne, knowing what this means now for them in heaven, that now

presenting himself as the sacrifice in the true Holy of Holies before the face of Jehovah God, this means this accuser who's been accusing us throughout the Old Testament period, day and night, can be cast down, and they shout with one voice, "Now is come salvation. Here is the sacrifice, here is the Lamb, presented before the tribunal of God, our redemption, full and free." And they continue, "Now is come strength, and now is come power, a strength and power that can shut the Devil's mouth once and for all. Now is come the kingdom," they say. "Satan's kingdom is defeated in principle. Christ, Lord over all, the right hand of God."

What a victory. What a day it was in heaven when Christ ascended there and with the Savior seated upon the throne, and all the implications of that for God's saints there that they know, verse 11 tells us that it's the saints themselves who overcome the devil now in heaven. Verse 11, "And they overcame him," That's the saints, as the rest of the verse makes clear, "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." "Look, Devil, here is the Lamb that was slain from before the foundation of the world, and now his decree has come to pass, and it's been accomplished, and here he is in glory. Here is the blood presented. Atonement has been made. Our souls have the right, the legal right to be here. You thought you had him in your grasp, but you didn't. He was paying for our sins there. This is the blood that we believed in that we knew would come by the word of prophecy that is sure and unchanging. Our testimony when we were on the earth was that we believed in this blood, the coming of the blood. The blood will cover us, we said and because of that, we loved not our lives unto the death. Devil, we let you kill us, if need be, because we knew this blood was coming and because of the blood, and the faith in the blood, you have no place here anymore." And they attack him and they drive him out of that place so that, verse 8 says their place was not found in heaven anymore.

I don't know about you, but as I read and study the Bible, I'm very thankful to be born in the New Testament, that I get to live and die in the time when the scriptures are complete, when we get to see the Old Testament prophecies in their fulfillment and the interplay between Old and New Testament, and can know the cross of Jesus Christ accomplished in the past tense. But if there's ever a time, beloved, when I would have wanted to be an Old Testament saint, who died in the Old Testament and went to heaven, it's when I read this passage. Wouldn't it have been marvelous to be a part of that throng of the Old Testament saints who charge at that old serpent, the devil, and push him and his demons out of heaven and slam the door behind him, to be there and to watch the Son of God come up in his ascension and the devil go down.

It's no wonder the command of verse 12 is, "Rejoice, ye heavens, and all who dwell there. Rejoice!" And rejoice they did, beloved, that day, and I would imagine they are still rejoicing. This was advance for them in the experience of the wonder of heaven. Don't forget that there is history in heaven, just like there is history upon the earth. There is history in heaven too and there is progress in the history of heaven. "Now is come salvation," up to heaven in a certain way, verse 10 says. No more accusing devil who can make this attack. That's an advance in the experience of heaven for the Old Testament saints. They do not have to hear him there and have him there, and after the ascension of Christ, he's barred from here. He has no right, no place to be here and the joy of heaven is

uninterrupted for those saints and the saints in the New Testament who die and go to glory.

That's the result of this for heaven but the first result of this for us on earth is a bit more sobering, isn't it? And verse 12 tells us, "Woe to the inhabitants 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." After the ascension of Christ and the removing of the devil from any access to heaven, the devil now focuses all of his attack in this great war of the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light, he focuses all his attention on us on the earth. He fights this war on one front now and not on two fronts anymore, having failed to prevent the coming of Jesus Christ, having failed to prevent the work of Christ to secure the saints. And barred from heaven, what else does he have? This is it. And so all of his attention is focused here upon the earth, and as he sees the counsel of God being more and more carried out to its fruition, more and more intensely does that attack come to pass, until finally when he's loosed at the end and unleashes a furious attack, one final attack at the end, trying to overcome God's counsel all the way to the end.

His attention is upon you and upon me and the church upon the earth. Are you conscious of that? Are you floating through your Christian life on autopilot? There's a war going on. He's concentrating all of his attack upon you. Why do you come to church, do you come to church just because it's the cultural thing to do, that's what you've always been taught? Or are you coming out of your spiritual need? "I need battle plans for this army. I need strength. I need motivation. I need to know the grace of God for me in this. I need to know the redemptive work of Christ for when I've fallen in this battle." Do you know that the temptations and the wickedness of this age in which we live are his? Are you connecting them to him and to his demons?

Verse 15 says that in the New Testament, he casts water to flood the church out. That's the attack of the wicked culture that he uses to try to flood the church out and overcome her by this flood of worldliness. We all talk about how godless the age is and society is and the transgenderism and the homosexuality and the sexual perversity that is this age, but are we remembering that this is all demonic? The devil and his host is behind all of that. If that doesn't help you with your temptations in this spiritual battle, behind that computer screen is a demon working on you, or whatever else it might be. And you come for strength. And you come for grace. And you come out of your need. And he gives grace.

And yet, just as the First Coming of Jesus Christ was not in question, neither is the Second, beloved. Just as the eternal counsel of God concerning the work of redemption and the atonement of Christ and his resurrection and ascension was not in question, it would be accomplished no matter what the devil does and what his attack is, the church would be preserved. Christ will come. So too now, this Christ, ascended into heaven at the right hand of God, holds the reins over all things, including that devil himself and all of his demons, and he will accomplish his purposes, and he will preserve his church even in a day and age such as this, and he will bring them to glory, and he will come back, and he will make all things new. And in the meantime, when he makes his accusations against the people of God covered in the blood of the Lamb, remember that ultimately they are

empty. The power of them has been sucked out by the Lamb of God, slain, risen, ascended into glory. His accusations are no good there up in heaven after the ascension of Jesus Christ, and no good here either ultimately against you and me. A once-for-all sacrifice has been made. And like the saints there, so here, overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and you point him to the Christ. "Yes, Devil, if I was standing in myself, I would have no leg to stand upon, and I know you would drag my soul to hell at the moment of my death. But I'm not in myself. I am in Jesus Christ. His blood has atoned for me, and he's risen and brought that blood before the tribunal of God into heaven. And I plead him, on the basis of him. You can't take me. And as sure, Devil, as it is that he came the first time, he's going to come the second time and then he's going to cast you not only out of heaven but out of this entire cosmos and into the lake of fire. And the saints, undisturbed, will be together with him in the joy of the new heavens and new earth. Surely, surely, it will come to pass." Amen.