

Back to the History of the Future

Revelation 12:4-17

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Rev 12:1-18 NKJV] 1 Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. 2 Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. 4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. 5 She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. 6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days. 7 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, 8 but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. 9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. 10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. 11 "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. 12 "Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time." 13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male [Child]. 14 But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and

times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. **15** So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. **16** But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. **17** And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. **18**

APPLICATION

Chapter 12 centers around three main characters that take us into the past and blast us into the future. Since this is part 2, I've taken the recommendation to entitle this morning's sermon "*Back to the History of the Future.*"

1. **A Woman** - Has the sun, moon, and twelve stars in her design.
2. **A Child** - destined to rule the world.
3. **A Dragon** - Who is the great enemy of the Woman, the child, the heavenly angels, and the earth.

As we break down the timeline of this chapter, people differ on where the timeline shifts from the past to the future.

It's worth noting this important observation regarding biblical prophecy. Frequently, we see a great amount of time between events that only have a period between them on a written page.

"Somewhat as a picture lacks the dimension of depth, the prophecy often lacks the dimension of time: events appear together on the screen of prophecy which in their fulfillment may be widely separated in time." - **Alva McClain**

TIMELINE

I believe that as we examine this chapter, we see the following timeline:

- **Past (verses 1-5) - The Satanic attack on Israel's Messiah**

- **Present (the small space between verses 5 and 6) - The unwritten church age.**
- **Future (verses 6-17) - Satanic attack on Israel and God's divine protection**

1 Events Past (vs. 1-5)

RECAP

Last week, we began to look at this "sign" in heaven regarding a pregnant woman and a dragon:

- The woman, with the sun, moon, and twelve stars, resembles the Old Testament picture of the nation of Israel.
- The nation of Israel, from its formation until the fullness of time, was travailing in labor to see the Messiah birthed.
- But as we saw, a dragon with great authority showed up on the scene.
- This dragon is none other than Satan or the devil. We examined his five titles last week. Satan drew 1/3 of the angelic hosts to follow Him, and from the Garden of Eden, their mission has been the **deception** and **destruction** of humanity.
 - This dragon is represented as having seven heads and ten horns. We also see a beast in chapters 13 and 17 that has seven heads and ten horns. (We have a restaurant in Saint Joe called Hoof & Horn) These are the "heads & horns." And we find later that they represent past, present, and future world powers. The fact that the dragon has these signifies Satan's authority and influence over the world powers that have governed all throughout Human history and the final empire that will be of the antichrist yet future.
 - Chapter 13 - the beast was given authority by the dragon.

Well, as we continue in verse 4, we find that the dragon, on top of being a thief and a liar, had a very specific agenda surrounding God's plan of salvation for mankind.



The goal of Satan, from the fall of man in the Garden, was to stop or destroy the hope of a savior or Messiah who could undo the damage he had caused.

In Genesis 3, we have what's known in theological terms as the "Protoevangelium" (first prophecy of the Messiah's victory of the works of Satan) = **[Gen 3:15 NKJV] 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."**

- **Seed (singular) of the woman** - the virgin birth of Jesus, the Messiah. He would ultimately crush the head of the serpent and his seed.
- **Seed of the serpent** - Anti-Christ and all those born of deception. Remember when Jesus told the Pharisees that they were "of their father the devil?" Jesus crushed Satan's authority through the cross and resurrection. Today, His truth crushes the lies of the devil, and one-day future, Jesus will crush the antichrist and do away with Satan's authority once and for all.

Satan had been on a mission to wipe off the opportunity for this Messiah. Satan did not know the exact time of the Messiah's coming and was always on the offensive against Israel and the potential of the Messiah's birth.

- This is why he moved Pharaoh to kill all Hebrew children, but God preserved Moses.
- This is why Satan moved Herod to kill all the Hebrew children, but God warned Joseph and preserved Jesus.

QUOTE

“ The birth of Jesus was more than a cute nativity story. One author put it,

“The nativity was an all-out invasion on enemy- occupied territory. Every gun in the arsenal of darkness was aimed in the little baby’s direction, yet He still triumphed.”

APPLICATION

It is possible that Satan, being so self-deceived, believed that he had successfully "devoured" the child at the cross. What a shock to the system of the Satanic realm when Jesus burst open the stone that blocked his tomb and conquered death forever!

[Col 2:15 NKJV] 15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

C. THE CHILD

5 She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

Again, if we let scripture interpret scripture, there can only be one identity to this child. It's Jesus.

1. **First, we have his ultimate position of authority**- born to rule the nations with a rod of iron.
 1. **[Psa 2:7-9 NKJV] 7 "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You. 8 Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' "**
 2. **Rod of Iron** - Describes what prophetic picture of Jesus we are talking about. This is not referring to the spiritual rule of Jesus in the hearts of His church today. Today, Jesus leads His people with a shepherd's staff, but one day, he will rule every nation with a rod of iron. The Rod of Iron is a picture of fierce and swift justice. The rod of iron isn't a tool meant to heal or guide, it's a tool to administer punishment and set forth a firm foundation of ultimate authority.
 3. One day, the ultimate seat of justice will not be in a national judicial system but will be handled by the followers of Jesus. For just as Jesus received all authority from the Father to rule and reign, so he will share that responsibility with his saints one day.

1. [Rev 2:26-27 NKJV] 26 "And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations-- 27 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels' --as I also have received from My Father;"

2. Second, we see His ascension into heaven - caught up to God's throne.

1. [Mar 16:19 NKJV] 19 So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.

2 Events Present

APPLICATION

This is the most enormous printed gap in the Bible—the little empty space between verses 5 and 6. What is perhaps most fascinating about this passage is what's not written, for between verses 5 and 6, there have been over 2000 years of human history.

- Between the resurrection and ascension of Christ and the escape of Israel into a secret place from Satanic attack is an unknown period of time in which God is dealing with the world through grace and manifesting His truth and wisdom through the church.
- You might recall previously I talked about the pause button on the stopwatch of Israel's history. God has a designated amount of time and a plan in which he deals with Israel and will bring forth all of his promises.

This means that we are living in the Great Pause regarding Israel's timeline.

We see this twice in this passage.

- John records the birth of Jesus and the ascension of Jesus, but the parenthesis of his life is left out.
- Then we have the ascension of Jesus right into the final tribulation period, but the parenthesis of the church is left out.

What does this tell us? This specific prophecy focuses on God and his dealings with Israel (The Woman), not God and the church.

Peter, in His understanding and preaching of the gospel, alludes to this gap that he was living in between Christ's departure and His return.

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Act 3:19-21 NKJV] 19 "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, 20 and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, 21 whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."

THE TIME OF REPENTANCE AND REFRESHING

Today is not the time for heaven on earth. Today is the time for those on the earth to prepare for heaven.

- Today is the day that all men everywhere are called to repent of their sin, turn to Christ, and follow the One true and living God.
- Now is the time for people to receive the kingdom in their hearts that will one day rule their streets, and to live out that kingdom in preparation for the coming King!

3 Events Future

APPLICATION

In verses 7 -17, instead of going verse by verse, we are going to discuss the five main events that take place:

1. **The Fight in Heaven**
2. **The Flight of Israel**
3. **The Might of the Saints**
4. **The Spite of the Devil**

A. THE FIGHT IN HEAVEN

[Rev 12:7-9 NKJV] **7 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, 8 but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. 9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.**

Though I don't understand it completely, the Bible clearly teaches that there are battles that rage between angelic forces of good and evil.

- Notice that the battle that ultimately gets Satan and His angels permanently revoked from heaven is not between Jesus and Satan, but Michael and Satan.
 - When it comes time for Jesus to deal with Satan, there is no battle. God and Satan are not equals. They are Creator and created.
 - Satan is a powerful being, but even he is no match for Michael. it would appear that angels cannot destroy one another, but they can resist each other and forcefully drive each other out of certain places. God allows these spiritual battles until the time comes for Him to take total control.
- I do believe this is a future event for several reasons:
 - ***Satan currently has access to heaven.*** We learn this in the book of Job when Satan goes between wandering the earth to the presence of God, where he is still allowed to bring forth his accusations. He still does this to the believers and will do so until he is permanently restricted from God's throne room.
 - ***verse 8 - any longer*** - so there is a designated amount of time that He is allowed a place in heaven, for purposes that only God knows.

- ***His angels were cast with Him*** - this differentiates this even from the earlier event where He took 1/3 of the heavenly stars with him to the earth. That event was when He gathered his initial force that he would have when he ultimately battles against Michael and God's angels.
- **Satan's fate has five stages** - first, he "fell" from grace with God and became the enemy of good. Pride filled his heart, and he rebelled. Jesus said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven," speaking of his initial fall as an angel of God. Second, he lost power and authority when Christ died on the cross and rose from the grave. He no longer has victory in the life of the believer. Third, will be permanently cast from heaven to the earth as described in this chapter. That's when he knows for certain that his time is short. Fourth, he will be in chains for a thousand years while Christ reigns on the earth but will be temporarily released to gather the world for one final battle. Finally, he will be judged and cast into the lake of fire that burns forever, and we won't hear from him again!

B. THE FLIGHT OF ISRAEL

We have this 3 1/2 year event recorded in two sections of the chapter:

[Rev 12:6, 14-16 NKJV] 6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days. ... 14 But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. 15 So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. 16 But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.

APPLICATION

There is a 3 1/2 year period within the tribulation that Israel will be targeted like never before by Satan, most likely through the forces of the antichrist.

- More than likely, this occurs when Satan knows his time is short, has been excommunicated from heaven, has possessed the antichrist, has declared himself God in God's temple, and breaks his peace covenant with many nations at the halfway mark of the tribulation. We get the sense that those Jews dwelling in Israel and Jerusalem will flee at that point, with God's divine protection and guidance, to be protected from the Satanic forces that seek to wipe them out.
- I believe this is the event that Jesus described in Matthew 24 and Mark 13:

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Mar 13:14-18 NKJV] 14 "So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 15 "Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. 16 "And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. 17 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 18 "And pray that your flight may not be in winter.

WHERE WILL THEY GO?

No one knows for certain, but a few things we DO know:

- It's a place of divine preparation - God has designed this place for this time. It's also in a wilderness area.
- It's a place of divine provision - they will feed and nourish her...
- It's a place of divine protection - the earth will swallow up the Satanic attacks.

Location: [Isa 16:4-5 NKJV] 4 Let My outcasts dwell with you, O Moab; Be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler. For the extortioner is at an end, Devastation ceases, The oppressors are consumed out of the land. 5 In mercy the throne will be established; And One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, Judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness."

Prior to the enthronement of the Messiah, God's people will find refuge in the region of Moab. Speaking of the Antichrist's reign of terror against God's people, Daniel tells us this:

[Dan 11:41 NKJV] 41 "He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon.

- Edom, Moab, and Ammon refer to the area of modern-day Jordan.
- There is speculation that perhaps the fortress city of Petra, guarded by its narrow walled entrance, this area of 163 square miles is nearly impenetrable by land.

C. THE MIGHT OF THE SAINTS

[Rev 12:10-11 NKJV] 10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. 11 "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

APPLICATION

Notice that the tribulation saints who resisted the antichrist and the devil ultimately overcame him. Notice HOW they overcame him. This is important because, though the context is the tribulation saints who ultimately give their lives for Christ because of their refusal to worship the beast, the strategy applies to every believer who is engaged in Spiritual warfare.

Remember, the letters to the seven churches end with the following promise: To him who OVERCOMES. Notice three things employed:

- **Faith** - the blood of the Lamb. Namely, their trust in the blood of Jesus against the accusations of the Devil before God. Day and night they were accused. But the sacrifice of Christ and what His blood accomplished spoke the louder truth.
 - *[1Pe 5:9 NKJV] 9 Resist him (the devil), steadfast in the faith...*
 - *"Although my memory's fading, I remember two things very clearly: I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior." -John*

Newton (author of Amazing Grace)

- ***“Stand at the foot of the cross, and count the purple drops by which you have been cleansed: see the thorn-crown; mark His scourged shoulders, still gushing with crimson streams... And if you do not lie prostrate on the ground before that cross, you have never seen it.” -Spurgeon***
- **Boldness**- word of their testimony. The word testimony is to testify or bear witness before a judge or a crowd. In other words, they overcame Satan by being unashamed of the truth of Christ. they "bore witness" to His resurrection with their lives, words, and actions.
 - I believe that it's true that one thing Satan fears the most is a Christian who is not ashamed to declare the truth, power, and righteousness of Jesus Christ and what He has done in their lives.
 - Here's the incredible truth. If you know Jesus, that means you have a story about how God took you out of darkness and pulled you into the light. That is a story worth telling. Your witness continues to shine the light of the gospel into the dark territory of the devil.
- **Sacrifice**- did not love their lives to the death. The language and tense here imply that the quality of their life was that there was no self-love, so much so that when it came to giving their lives for Christ, there was no conflict.
 - You know, there are many people living in comfort today that say things like, "I would give my life for Christ," But they won't give their time to serve Him, they won't give their resources to bless Him and others, and they writhe in complaint and anger if the comfort of their lives is disrupted to the slightest degree. But they'll give up their life for Christ.
 - Paul said that self-sacrifice is not a one-time event that occurs when you're faced with death for Christ's sake. It's a lifestyle of servanthood to Jesus.
 - **[Gal 2:20 NKJV] 20 "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the [life] which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.**
 - **[Jhn 12:25 NKJV] 25 "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.**

D. THE SPITE OF THE DEVIL

[Rev 12:12 NKJV] 12 "Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."

[Rev 12:13, 17 NKJV] 13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male [Child].

17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

APPLICATION

When Satan finally understands the end has come, his rage is unleashed on the world, on Israel, and on those who believe in Christ. His attempts against Israel are futile, so he chases the redeemed Jews who are scattered throughout the world. Also, there is a woe to the "inhabitants of the earth" in verse 12 - this always refers to unbelievers in the world.

- Right now, Satan has a restrained authority.
- But there is coming a time when his deception will not be questioned by the majority of the world.

APPLICATION

We shouldn't understate the amount of hatred that Satan has toward the people God loves.

- He will always have a heightened target on Israel, the people God has brought the Messiah through in the past and will establish His kingdom through in the future. He will always have a heightened target on the church, the people he currently reigns in and through who have the power to overcome Him.
- All antisemitism and Christian persecution is rooted in Satan. Satan controls Islam, and Satan controls communism. Anywhere you see Christian persecution and Antisemitism, Satan has a powerful stronghold.

ILLUSTRATION

In the Holocaust under Hitler, one-third of the world's Jewish population died. Under the fierce persecution of the Antichrist, controlled and energized by Satan, two-thirds of the Jewish population will die.

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Zec 13:8-9 NKJV] 8 And it shall come to pass in all the land," Says the LORD, "that two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, But one-third shall be left in it: 9 I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people'; and each one will say, 'The LORD is my God.' "

CONCLUSION

Through all this, we see that the Lord's victory is coming! His deliverance, plans, and kingdom will come to pass through the fire of this judgment.
