

Jesus Defeats Satan
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Revelation 12:1–17 (ESV)

In the dark days of 1940 Hitler's Luftwaffe bombed London nightly for 57 consecutive nights. More than one million London houses were destroyed or damaged, and more than 40,000 civilians were killed, almost half of them in London.¹

We can imagine that under such attack by such an evil, bloodthirsty enemy, the people of England must have believed defeat was certain. Yet one man rallied the nation to fight on. Winston Churchill never said it would be easy. In fact he was very blunt about the dangers they faced. Yet, he electrified the people with the belief that right would prevail.

God's people and purposes have been under the unrelenting attack of Satan and his demonic forces since the Garden of Eden. His singular mission is to "steal, kill, and destroy." But in today's passage we have our "Churchill" to encourage us of victory. His name is John, and what he saw was incredible and reassuring. Churchill predicted victory, but he couldn't promise it. John's account in Revelation twelve DOES promise followers of Christ that while we haven't seen Satan's final defeat, it's already secured.

The big idea of this lesson is summed up well by Warren Wiersbe:

*Satan is the great enemy of the church, and he fights against God and His people by accusing the saints in heaven and attacking them on earth. However, Christ has overcome the old serpent, and He gives victory to His people.*²

I love lots of interaction with YOU and not just me talking. However, there is so much symbolism to interpret in this passage, I'll do most of it in "lecture" format in the interest of staying on time. Feel free to raise a hand to share any thoughts you have. Let's read verses one through nine to get the picture. After we've seen what it says, we'll look at what we believe it means, and how it should change us this week.

Revelation 12:1–9 (ESV)

12 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. 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. 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, 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, who accuses them day and night before our God.

- In verse one John is shown a “sign.” He sees a second “sign” in verse three.
- A sign is a symbol that points to something else. It’s subject to interpretation.
- The sign in verse one is a pregnant woman going into labor. She was “clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.” **Any guesses who this woman represents?**
- Most scholars believe the woman represents the righteous remnant of Israel. “The remnant described by Paul in Romans 9:1-8 rather than all of ethnic Israel. [The] same group is represented by the 144,000 elect from the twelve tribes of Israel (Rev. 7:1-8; 14:1-5).³”
- In the Old Testament, Israel is often compared to a woman, and even a woman in travail (Isa. 54:5; 66:7; Jer. 3:6–10; Micah 4:10; 5:2–3).⁴ We’ll see more confirmation of this interpretation as we study further.
- Verse three reveals the image of “a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. ⁴ His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth.” We don’t have to guess who this is. Verse nine tells us. Satan thrown from Heaven with a third of the angels.
- This description “corresponds with the same number of heads and horns in Daniel’s beast-like representations of the nations that opposed Israel in the Old Testament: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome (Dan. 7).”⁵
- The dragon (Satan) was poised to “devour” the woman’s newborn.
- Verse five tells us: “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.”
- **So, who is the male child?**

In Revelation 19:11 (ESV) John tells us:

¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

- This also further identifies the woman: Since this child is identified as Jesus Christ (compare Rev. 12:5 with Rev. 19:15 and Ps. 2:9), this symbolic woman can be none other than the nation Israel.⁶ (See note below at ⁷)
- The son is born and is then caught up to the throne of God (Rev. 12:5). This symbolizes “the birth of Christ and His victorious ascension, but nothing is said about either His life or His death.”⁸
- With Christ ascended to God the Father, the dragon sets out to destroy the woman (Israel) but she is swept to a place of protection for 1,260 days.
- The number three and a half was associated by Christians and Jews with times of evil and judgment (see Luke 4:25). John variously referred to the three and a half years as either “42 months” (11:2; 13:5) or “1,260 days” (11:3; 12:6) or “a time, times and half a time.”⁹
- We see this in Dan. 7:25 and Rev. 11:2; 13:5. Many believe the Great Tribulation will be...the three and one-half years preceding the second coming of Christ.¹⁰
- This protection of the remnant of Israel is a lesson for us...

The Life Application Study Bible applies this to us today:

*Satan always attacks God’s people, but God keeps them spiritually secure. Some will experience physical harm, but all will be protected from spiritual hurt. God will not let Satan take the souls of God’s true followers.*¹¹

- Verses seven through nine depict a “war” in Heaven.
- This is evidently a reference to the fall of Satan (Isa. 14:12–15), when he and his hosts revolted against God.¹²
- Verse 12:7 fulfills Daniel 12:1 (ESV)

12 “At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.

- There are differing opinions about when Satan's fall from heaven takes place. Some believe that it happened at the resurrection or ascension of Christ, others believe it will be in the middle of a literal seven-year tribulation period.
- Verses 10 and 11 are the “heart” of this lesson:

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, who accuses them day and night before our God.

- The name *devil* means “accuser,” and *Satan* means “adversary.”¹³
- John Walvoord notes, “While the concept of Satan in heaven is difficult to comprehend, it is clear that he is now the accuser of the saints (cf. Job 1:6; Rev. 12:10). Though Satan was defeated at the first coming of Christ (John 16:11), his execution was delayed and is in stages.”¹⁴
- What a picture to have in our minds: “Satan accuses us before God every day and night.” And we give Satan so much material to work with!

Ephesians 6:11–12 (ESV) tells us to...

¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

- **How does this picture of Satan attacking and accusing God’s people help you understand spiritual warfare the way Paul described it in those verses?**
- Some believe when “believers will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and have their works examined. [It’s] likely that Satan will be present at this event and will accuse the saints, pointing out all the “spots and wrinkles” in the church.¹⁵
- “At the same time, Jesus Christ, our advocate, ceaselessly intercedes for us (Heb. 7:25).”¹⁶ Think of it! Satan says we’re worthless and Jesus says, “Not true! That one is forgiven...covered by MY BLOOD!” Look at verse eleven:

11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

- If you don’t remember anything else, highlight and remember verse eleven!
- Because Jesus Christ died for us, we can overcome Satan’s accusations “by the blood of the Lamb.” Our salvation is secure, not because of our own works, but because of His finished work at Calvary. Every sin is covered!
- Verse twelve says: “Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them!”
- All this infuriates Satan because, as it says, “...he knows that his time is short!”

- At this future time he will unleash a stronger attack on the remnant of Israel.
- We're told "in the middle of the Tribulation, there will come a wave of anti-Semitism such as the world has never seen (Rev. 12:6). But God will protect His people during those three-and-a-half years; ...a believing remnant of Jews will survive this very troublesome time."¹⁷

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. And he stood on the sand of the sea.

- **How does knowing about Satan's ultimate defeat give you confidence each day in living for Christ?**

So, What's the Takeaway?

Chuck Swindoll gives us some great application of this passage to us today:

- Revelation 12 teaches us that Israel may be blind and disobedient as a nation, but God has never forgotten them. He never will.
- The fact of God's faithfulness even to faithless Israel should give us hope, too!
- (God) stands by His promise to each of us: "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you" (Heb. 13:5).
- Revelation 12 also teaches us that although Satan is a powerful and aggressive foe, he will not triumph. *(Some great verses below for when Satan's attack is particularly strong.)*
- One day God will resurrect the saints and transform the living, giving them new, immortal bodies (1 Cor. 15:51-53). On that day Satan's mouth will be shut, for he will no longer have any basis on which to accuse us.¹⁸

We need to remember as Warren Wiersbe reminds us:

*Satan is not equal to God; he is not omnipotent, omnipresent, or omniscient. His power is limited and his tactics must fail when God's people trust the power of the blood and of the Word. Nothing Satan does can rob us of "salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ" (Rev. 12:10), if we are yielded to Him.*¹⁹

Verses to Strengthen Us When We're Under Satan's Attack:

Luke 22:31–32 (ESV)

³¹ “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, ³² but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

Ephesians 6:12–13 (ESV)

¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

2 Timothy 1:7 (ESV)

⁷ for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

James 4:7–8 (ESV)

⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

1 Peter 5:8–10 (ESV)

⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. ¹⁰ And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Blitz#cite_ref-Richards_1954.2C_p._217.5-0

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 602). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³ Insights on Revelation (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 15) by Charles R. Swindoll

⁴ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 602). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁵ Insights on Revelation (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 15) by Charles R. Swindoll

⁶ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 602). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁷ It was through Israel that Jesus Christ came into the world (Rom. 1:3; 9:4–5). By further comparing the description in Revelation 12:1 with Genesis 37:9–10, the identification seems certain.

⁸ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 602). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁹ Sloan, R. B. (1998). The Revelation. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman concise Bible commentary* (p. 675). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

¹⁰ Walvoord, J. F. (1985). Revelation. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 959). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹¹ Life Application Study Bible (NIV) - Grand Rapids - Zondervan Publishing House - 1997

¹² Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 602). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹³ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 603). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹⁴ John F. Walvoord, "Revelation," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament Edition*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 959.

¹⁵ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 603). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹⁶ *Insights on Revelation* (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 15) by Charles R. Swindoll

¹⁷ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 603). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹⁸ *Insights on Revelation* (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 15) by Charles R. Swindoll

¹⁹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 603). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.