

The Ancient Spiritual War – Part 2

Revelation 12:7-12

Will you take your Bibles and turn to Revelation chapter 12? We have been in this wonderful Revelation of Jesus Christ since January and we have now come to this particular passage of Scripture beginning in verse seven.

Let me read the text to you, Revelation 12 beginning in verse seven.

And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

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 brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death. For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time."¹

This amazing disclosure the Lord now gives to the beloved apostle on Patmos must have been exhilarating to him. John knew of Satan's temptation of Christ. John was a first hand witness of numerous encounters with Satan and his minions. Certainly, he has watched Christ deliver the two demoniacs and cast those demons into the swine. He had seen, first hand, the young boy in Luke nine who would suddenly scream and then be thrown down to the ground into convulsions, foaming at the mouth, and then the demon would maul the boy. He saw Jesus rebuke that unclean spirit and heal that boy. He had observed first hand how Satan had deceived the Gentiles and the Jews of that day. And in horror he watched Jesus hang on the cross of Calvary having been betrayed by the demonized Judas and sentenced by Satan's henchmen.

And now this 90 year old apostle of Christ—and therefore an enemy of Satan—is doing hard labor on a little island in a Roman penal colony and then he receives this news. Satan is doing down.

Finally the words of the Lord that he had recorded in John 12:31 are coming to fruition where the Lord said, "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out."² Here in our text this morning, John sees and records the beginning of the end of Satan's epochal war with the God of glory and all who belong to him. Though it has already been won at Calvary, every soldier of the cross grows weary of this battle. Sometimes the fatigue and the frustration can almost be overwhelming.

¹ Revelation 12:7-12.

² John 12:31.

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Someone asked me recently: How can you keep from becoming furious with people who reject the truth? And I laughed for a moment, but I thought, well, frankly I focus my rage on the one who brought sin into the world and who deceives them. I focus my anger on the father of lies, on the one who disguises himself as an angel of light, the one who roams about the earth seeking whom he can devour, the prince in the power of the air, the temporary god of this world as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:4. I focus my anger on the one who goes before the throne of God and accuses believers day and night as we just read. In 1 John 5:19 John recorded, “The whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”³

There is where I will direct my anger. Unbelievers are spiritually dead. It seems rather foolish to me to come before a corpse and get mad at it. To scratch out a spot and pitch a fit every time you encounter people who reject the truth or persecute you is ridiculous. But for believers, as we do battle with sin and combat the myriad of temptations that are out there and the attacks that we constantly experience that are inherent in this world’s system that God allows Satan to rule, boy, for us it is different. There is where our anger can be focused, on the one who is the enemy of our souls.

We are reminded in Romans 12 verse 19, “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,’ says the Lord.”⁴ And indeed he will. In Ephesians six verse 12 we read that:

...our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.⁵

And Paul tells us as well in 2 Corinthians 10 beginning at verse three, “For though we walk in the flesh...”⁶ In other words, though we have human limitations:

We do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.⁷

That is referring to Satanic strongholds, strongholds of deception, fortresses of deception. He goes on to say, “We are destroying speculations...”⁸ meaning false ideologies, “and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”⁹ Beloved, please hear me. We assault systems of deception, not the spirits that concoct them. We don’t go around casting out demons. We unleash the gospel of truth for it is the power of God unto salvation.

³ 1 John 5:19.

⁴ Romans 12:19.

⁵ Ephesians 6:13-14.

⁶ 2 Corinthians 10:3.

⁷ 2 Corinthians 10:3-4.

⁸ 2 Corinthians 10:5.

⁹ Ibid.

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We are warned, 2 Corinthians 2:11, to be wary of his schemes. Are you wary of his schemes, what he is trying to do to destroy you and your family and your children? And we are also commanded to give him no opportunity, Ephesians 4:27. But we are not commanded to go around and to do exorcisms and to try to bind Satan and all of those things. Instead, as James tells us in chapter four verse seven we are to “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will [what?] flee from you.”¹⁰ “Thank you, Lord. I will do that. I will submit to you. I will resist him and he will flee from me.” And why will the devil flee from us? Because, beloved, when we are submitting to God we are filled with the Spirit of God. And, as John tells us in 1 John 4:4, “Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.”¹¹

We can’t fight this war with mystical incantations, binding Satan, rebuking him. I always wondered, when you bind him is that just Pleasant View or is that all of middle Tennessee? Is that all of Tennessee? Is that the whole world? If so, how long? I mean, is this going to last for the day or what? We are not taught to go around and to rebuke him. You don’t talk to Satan. You don’t talk to demons. You don’t write him letters like some of these seminars would have you do. We don’t fight this supernatural enemy with human intellect or the power of persuasion. We have to have supernatural weaponry. And that is the power of the Word of God and prayer.

Don’t become a demon buster, dear friends. Put on your armor. Pick up your sword which is the Word of God, and then march on your knees into battle and you will defeat the enemy through the power of God. Live a life that reflects the righteousness of Christ knowing all the while that he is a defeated foe. And that is what we read about here today.

We can rejoice, as Paul tells us, in Romans 16:20, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.”¹² We can celebrate knowing what we read in Hebrews 2:14, that Jesus rendered, “powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.”¹³ And, again, John understood all of this. That is why he recorded in 1 John 4:4, “Greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world.”¹⁴

But don’t you know he had to be thrilled to witness now in this vision Satan being permanently expelled from heaven, knowing that he is going down. I suppose you could call this righteous gloating.

So here in the first six verses of Revelation 12 we were introduced, last week, to the woman who is Israel, the dragon that is Satan and the male child that is the Lord Jesus Christ. And now this morning we will be introduced to the archangel Michael.

¹⁰ James 4:7.

¹¹ 1 John 4:4.

¹² Romans 16:20.

¹³ Hebrews 2:14.

¹⁴ 1 John 4:4.

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Now, let me give you the big picture before we examine the text more closely. The sounding of the seventh trumpet in chapter 11 sets into motion the final judgments that God will pour out upon the world just before he returns. Now the actual details of those judgments, which are called the bowl judgments, are described later on in chapters 15 through 18 when the chronological narrative of the tribulation will resume. And, of course, that will lead to the Lord's triumphant return as King of kings and Lord of lords where he will return and triumph over Satan once and for all and establish his kingdom.

But what we have here in chapters 12 through 14 is a parenthetical section that chronicles Satan's career and actually recapitulates all of the events, the judgments and so forth of Revelation six through 11. So understand now that the first six verses of chapter 12 provide a sweeping overview of Satan's ancient rebellion and his war with God and his covenant people symbolized by the woman as well as her son, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now where we are at today in verses seven through 12 we find John recording for us this amazing battle that takes place in heaven where Michael is used by God to permanently expel Satan from the presence of God and cast him to the earth. And soon thereafter we find that he will be cast into the abyss, the lake of fire which will be his permanent, eternal abode.

I have divided these few verses into three parts. We will first see *the war in heaven*, secondly, *the dragon's defeat* and, thirdly, *the heavenly celebration*. Before we look at it, let me give you one other important fact that I find deeply encouraging.

If you will notice, all of this is yet future, though grammatically it is presented in the past tense. You might ask: Why is that? This is because the Spirit of God is using a literary device that was especially popular in that language to describe some future event as though it were already an accomplished fact, in other words, to emphasize the certainty of an event. Grammarians call this a proleptic aorist. And literally what this is referring to is the fact that what God is going to do—even though it is described in the past tense—is so absolutely certain that it can be described as having already happened. So much of John's visions are proleptic, again, where future events are so certain they can be described in the past tense, a very important concept that we must keep in mind as we endeavor to understand Bible prophecy.

So, number one, *the war in heaven*, verse seven. "And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon."¹⁵

Now, throughout history Satan and his forces have been at war with God and the holy angels and certainly all those that belong. Beloved, beyond the veil of our earthly existence there is an angelic war that is going on all the time. In fact, we would be utterly overwhelmed with awe if somehow God chose to peel back the veil of our existence and we could see the angels in this place and around this church. According to Scripture, Satan has a highly organized army of demons that he commands. We read that, for

¹⁵ Revelation 12:7.

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example, in Ephesians six verse 12, including those in charge of earthly nations and empires like the prince of the kingdom of Persia you will recall in Daniel 10. Remember for 21 days he withstood a magnificent angel that God sent as a messenger to Daniel until finally according to the text, quote, “Michael, one of the chief princes,”¹⁶ was dispatched to free him.

In both Testaments this archangel Michael is seen as the magnificent champion of God’s covenant people, especially the people of Israel as we read here in Revelation 12. In fact, in Jude verse nine we see him being described as an archangel who, quote, “Disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses.”¹⁷ That story is described in Deuteronomy 34. We can only imagine the nefarious plan that Satan had for Moses’ body. And, obviously, by the Lord’s power Michael was victorious over Satan and according to verse six in Deuteronomy 34 the Lord buried Moses, “In the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-Peor.”¹⁸ That was where the Israelites were encamped. And then it concludes saying, “But no man knows his burial place to this day.”¹⁹

So this is not the first time Michael has encountered Satan and his forces. This is an ancient foe. And Scripture is silent regarding how angels fight. We don’t know anything really about that. We don’t know how they war, the actual tactics that they use. And sometimes it is fun to kind of muse about that, but we are just really not told. We are not told the type of casualties they experience. All of that is a mystery.

But here we see God dispatching Michael, once again, along with this celestial army that Michael leads to wage war with the dragon. In fact, Daniel describes Michael during these times of Daniel’s 70th week, the time of the tribulation in chapter 12 verse one. Here is what he says: “Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.”²⁰

There is an important note that we must look at here. Grammatically the phrase in verse seven—“Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon”²¹—reveals that Satan was the instigator of this conflict. “Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon.”²² It could actually be translated, “Michael and his angels had to fight the dragon.”

Now, we could ask the question: What triggered Satan’s attack? What was going on here? And, beloved, here we can only speculate. Some say, “Well, perhaps this is when the Church is raptured, snatched away, when we pass through the territory of “the prince and the power of the air.” And there is some merit to this. There is no indication here

¹⁶ Daniel 10:13.

¹⁷ Jude 9.

¹⁸ Deuteronomy 34:6.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Daniel 12:1.

²¹ Revelation 12:7.

²² Ibid.

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when Satan will actually be expelled or how long the battle will ensue. So perhaps this is the trigger. Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians four verse 16:

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.²³

Now we can't be sure, but since this seems to occur in the middle of the week, in the middle of the tribulation, after Israel has fled into the wilderness for the three and a half years according to verse six, I think that it is more compelling to argue that the trigger may well be a combination of supernatural victories that we see regarding the two witnesses on earth and God's protection of the 144,000 along with three angels that we will learn about that are flying in mid heaven in chapter 14. They are flying in mid heaven making various proclamations of warnings and trying to bring people on the earth to an understanding of Christ.

Now all of these things would be blatant attacks against Satan, against his diabolical plan to destroy God's people and to prevent the establishment of the kingdom, attacks that would certainly infuriate Satan. But, again, we don't really know. But we know it will happen. But notice as well, the end of verse seven:

The dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.²⁴

Obviously the dragon and his wretched minions are defeated. They are expelled. The cleansing of heaven is now complete. But there yet remains the purification on earth. No longer will God hear his slanders against the redeemed. Now the ancient foe is seething with rage, but his defeat in heaven, frankly, is only a harbinger of a much more thorough defeat that will come.

And so now according to verse 12, knowing his time is short we see that he will focus his attention on Christians, especially the Jews that are now coming to a saving knowledge of Christ understanding that he is their Messiah.

Secondly, we see *the dragon's defeat* beginning in verse nine. "And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him."²⁵

It is interesting the Lord describes this wicked fiend in five ways. He is called the great dragon, underscoring the vicious cruelty of this monster. He is described as the serpent

²³ 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

²⁴ Revelation 12:7-8.

²⁵ Revelation 12:9.

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of old, identifying him as the serpent in the garden that tempted Adam and Eve. He is described as the devil, that means the slanderer, the maligner, the one who roams about the earth collecting evidence to accuse the saints before God's bar of justice. He is described as Satan which is actually a transliteration of the Hebrew word *satan* that refers to a super human adversary. And he is also, finally, described as he who deceives or literally misleads the whole world, the one who is an absolute genius in seducing people to believe what is false while at the same time convincing them that it is true. And then when he causes them to fall he accuses them before God.

Deceptions abound today. Every time you turn on the television or you go to the Christian bookstore. They are everywhere. People are constantly asking me questions about various things and having me read certain books. There is a new fictional novel that is out today called *The Shack*. It is on the *New York Times* best seller. And many Christians as well as non Christians are bragging about what a wonderful book this is. And I have had a lot of people ask me about it, so I read it. And, beloved, I was astounded at how heretical that book is. It is filled with heresy. It is filled with things that are absolutely blasphemous.

By the way, any time something is wildly popular with the world, go to Matthew seven and be reminded . . . be reminded of the few and the many. There is a narrow gate and there is a broad gate. And whenever you see hordes of people running towards something, be at least a little bit suspicious. I will talk more about that this evening, but suffice it to say, dear friends, Satan is so ingenious in his counterfeits. And then, again, to think that he deceives us through temptations. He tricks us. And then when we yield to temptation and we walk into his trap, then he runs and accuses us before God. What a wicked monster he is.

As I thought about this, I thought, my, Satan would have no problem finding sin in my life to go before the throne and accuse me. He wouldn't in yours either. I thought of what Paul said in Romans seven. Remember when he evaluated himself as a Christian and he lamented over the effects of remaining sin? He said in verse 21, "I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good."²⁶ Don't you know, Satan is quick to point all of that out? In verse 31, though, he went on to say:

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.²⁷

Four reasons why we will never be found guilty: because of Christ's death, because of his resurrection, because of his exalted position and because he is constantly interceding on our behalf in the courtroom of heaven.

²⁶ Romans 7:21.

²⁷ Romans 8:31.

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Moreover, John tells us in 1 John 2:1, “If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”²⁸ Advocate, *parakleton* (par-ak’-lay-ton). It means “the helper,” “the one who comes alongside.” It is the idea that we have, shall we say, a defense attorney that counters the prosecution of Satan with the righteousness of Christ on which basis we have been declared not guilty. That is wonderful news.

Also in verse nine notice the Lord uses the phrase, “thrown down.” It means “to cast down,” “to forcibly remove” or “expel.” In this context—if I could use our vernacular—this means to man handle. This is a supernatural body slam from heaven to earth. Does that put it in perspective? Guys, you understand that. And he uses this three times to underscore the humiliating, ignominious method of his expulsion.

Now think of it this way. Satan and his minions were not asked to leave. They were not just kicked out. He didn’t get the boot. Beloved, he was thrown down. We must understand that he will be overpowered by a vastly superior force and physically hurled from heaven to earth. Now I have been thrown out of places before, maybe you have, too. But I have never had anyone pick me up and physically slam me to the ground, especially that distance, from heaven to earth. And I confess, I find great satisfaction when I contemplate this scene and I believe appropriately so.

This is actually the first of three humiliating throw downs for the dragon. At the beginning of the millennium according to Revelation 20 and verse one an angel will come down “down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand,”²⁹ and we read that “he will lay hold of the dragon.” Literally, he is going to seize him:

...the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and [bind] him for a thousand years; and [throw] him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.³⁰

And then, finally, at the great white throne judgment at the end of the millennial reign we read in Revelation 20 and verse 10 the devil will be “thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where he will be tormented day and night forever.”

So here we learn of the dragon’s inevitable defeat. But notice the reaction in verse 10. “Then 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 brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.”³¹

²⁸ 1 John 2:1.

²⁹ Revelation 20:1.

³⁰ Revelation 20:2-3.

³¹ Revelation 12:10.

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This leads us to my third point this morning and that is *the heavenly celebration*. Here the glorified saints erupt into song. This, by the way, will include us, dear friends. Here we have a little glimpse of what we will do in the future. The accuser of our brethren has been thrown down. Obviously his relentless and slanderous accusations have fallen on deaf ears because we have been declared righteous. As Paul said in Romans 5:1-2:

Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.³²

And, beloved, here in this heavenly scene, this celebration erupts because now hope has become reality, because now faith has become sight. Notice they rejoice saying, “Now the salvation...”³³ This is important to understand. This not only includes our personal glorification, but also the final lifting of the curse upon all of creation as we find described in Romans eight verse 19 and following. There Paul speaks of the, quote, “Anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing...”³⁴ There is the *apokalupsis* (ap-ok-al’-oop-sis). “...waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.”³⁵ Who is that? Well, that is us when we return with Christ to share in his glory. All of creation is waiting for that. He goes on to say:

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.³⁶

You must understand that all of creation today, as we read here figuratively, is trying to birth something. It is trying to birth the kingdom, a renovated earth. When the Lord returns to establish his kingdom he will renovate the earth. He will return it back to Edenic splendor. And at the end of that reign, he will recreate the heavens and the earth. There will be a new heaven and a new earth for the eternal state.

Now back to verse 10. We also see that we will rejoice in the, quote, “power,” not only salvation, but power. That is referring to the infinite, omnipotent, divine power that will accomplish all of this. “And,” he goes on to say, “the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come.”³⁷ In other words, the authority given to Christ Jesus by the Father over all of heaven and earth—remember in Matthew 28? Including the authority to rule the future earthly kingdom, all of this has now come.

³² Romans 5:1-2.

³³ Revelation 12:10.

³⁴ Romans 8:19.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Romans 8:20-22.

³⁷ Romans 8:22.

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And notice he says we will rejoice in that these things “have come.” The grammar here in the original language carries with it the idea that it has now finally, completely, fully and actually come to fruition. This is cause for the Hallelujah Chorus.

But notice, finally, the basis of our triumph over Satan in verse 11. “And they overcame him because of ...”³⁸ their mystical incantations they used to bind him. No. They overcame him because of their exorcisms that they used to cast him out. No, it doesn’t say that. How about because of their mystical formulas that they used to rebuke him, because they went to those seminars and learned how to do that and then read all of those books that fill our Christian book store shelves? They learned how to write letters to speak to Satan. Have you read that? People actually do this type of thing. You know, again, James 4:7, “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”³⁹

1 Peter 5:9. Peter also speaks of our “adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”⁴⁰ And what does he say after that? “But resist him, firm in your faith,”⁴¹ a Greek military term. We read the same thing in Ephesians 6:10, repeatedly. Resist and stand firm. Resist and stand firm. Stand firm in the Lord, in the strength of his might.

No, beloved, they overcame him because of two reasons. Number one, “the blood of the Lamb.” This is part of the Christian’s armor in Ephesians six that we must wear to be able to resist and stand firm. Remember, we are to “take up the helmet of salvation.” We must remember, as Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1:19 that we have been cleansed “with the precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.”⁴² As Paul tells us in Romans three and verse 24 we have been, “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”⁴³

And, as Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”⁴⁴ Romans 5:9. “Having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.”⁴⁵ Beloved, it is because of these things that none of Satan’s accusations will stand in the court of law where God exists because he now sees us as being clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

The second reason they overcame is “because of the Word of their testimony.” Grammatically this portrays the idea—and it could be translated this way—“the Word of God to which they have borne testimony.” Do you want to know how to do battle with

³⁸ Revelation 12:11.

³⁹ James 4:7.

⁴⁰ 1 Peter 5:8.

⁴¹ 1 Peter 5:9.

⁴² 1 Peter 1:19.

⁴³ Romans 3:24.

⁴⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:21.

⁴⁵ Romans 5:9.

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Satan and his minions? Bear testimony in your character and conduct to the Word of God. Submit to God. “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”⁴⁶

Sometimes people will hear me say, “Well, what about people who demon possessed?” Well, I have encountered many of them on numerous occasions, some even recently. What do you do? You unleash the gospel. You pray. “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation.”⁴⁷ Sometimes we think that somehow we have got to do something mystical. Beloved, never underestimate the power of the Word of God. Again, as we read earlier in 2 Corinthians 10:4, “The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.”⁴⁸ What are those weapons? The Word and prayer, the Word and prayer, Ephesians six. On and on we see this. This is how every saint overcomes and overpowers Satan and sin and death, through the gospel of Christ.

I want to give you a great example of this. In John Bunyan’s marvelous allegory *Pilgrim’s Progress* he describes his encounter with the devil. He calls him Apollyon. And after Apollyon had offered him false promises and threatened him and tried to intimidate him and cause him to doubt, he accused Christian saying, quote, “You have already been unfaithful in your service to him,” Apollyon sneered. “How do you think you can receive wages from him?”

“Oh, Apollyon, how have I been unfaithful to him?”

“You weakened in your resolve when you first set out and were nearly choked in the slough of despond. You tried to go wrong ways to get rid of your burden when you should have stayed on course until your prince had taken it off. You sinfully slept and lost your treasured things. You were almost persuaded to go back at the sight of the lions. And when you talk of your journey and what you have heard and seen, you inwardly desire recognition for all you say or do.”

“All of that is true,” answered Christian, “and much more that you have left out. But the prince whom I serve and honor is merciful and ready to forgive. Besides, these shortcomings possessed me in your country where I participated in them and groaned under their weight. I had been sorry for these things and have now received pardon by my prince.”

Suddenly, Apollyon erupted into a fierce rage, shrieking, “I am an enemy of this Prince! I hate His Person, His laws, and His people! I have come out with this purpose – to stop you!”

“Apollyon, beware of what you do,” warned Christian, “for I am in the King’s Highway, the way of holiness. Therefore you had better watch yourself.”

⁴⁶ James 4:7.

⁴⁷ Revelation 1:16.

⁴⁸ 2 Corinthians 10:4.

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Then Apollyon spread himself out in such a way as to cover the entire width of the way, and challenged, “I am without fear in this matter. Prepare to die! For I swear by my infernal dwelling that you shall go no farther. I will destroy your soul right here.” And at that he hurled a flaming arrow at Christian’s heart, but Christian had a shield in his hand which he blocked the arrow.

Then Christian drew his sword and roused himself for battle. Apollyon with feverish pace began throwing arrows as thick as hail. It was all Christian could do to avoid them. And, even so, he was wounded in his head, his hand and his foot. This caused Christian to retreat somewhat. Seeing this, Apollyon fell upon him with full and sudden fury. Christian regained his courage, however, and resisted as gallantly as he could. This fierce combat went on for more than a half a day until Christian’s strength was almost completely spent.

Because of his wounds he grew weaker and weaker. Apollyon saw his most opportune moment and drew up close to Christian. He began to wrestle with Christian and threw him forcefully to the ground and Christian’s sword flew out of his hand. Gloating, Apollyon said, “I am sure I have you now.” With that he assaulted Christian nearly to the point of death so that he began to despair of life itself. But as God would have it while Apollyon was preparing to strike his final blow to completely annihilate his foe, Christian quickly stretched out his hand and grabbed his sword saying, “Do not gloat over me, my enemy, though I have fallen, I will rise again.”

With that, Christian gave Apollyon a deadly thrust that made him fall back as if mortally wounded. Seeing this, Christian attacked again saying, “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” Apollyon then spread his dragon wings and sped away in defeat and Christian would see him no more. And then Bunyan writes this.

A more unequal match can hardly be,
Christian must fight an Angel; but you see,
The valiant man by handling Sword and Shield,
Doth make him, tho’ a Dragon, quit the field.

End quote.

Oh, dear child of God, never underestimate the power of God in doing battle with the enemy. Wear the whole armor of God. I will speak on that more tonight. Take up the shield of faith and wield your sword, the Word of God, with precision and you will parry the blows of the enemy.

Yes, according to verse 11, “And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.”⁴⁹ I love what Robert Thomas commented on this phrase. He said, quote, “This pictures the future heroism of these saints. They will put their lives on the

⁴⁹ Revelation 12:11.

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line out of loyalty to Christ. Paul, too, had this attitude as did Jesus himself. They will not love their earthly life. They will consent even to die, possibly a violent death, rather than relinquish their profession and fidelity to Christ. Being ready to die for their faith is the ultimate in Christian faithfulness,” end quote.

Beloved, I hope this describes you, all who name the name of Christ as Savior and Lord.

The final stanza of this hymn of heavenly celebration concludes in verse 12. “For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them.”⁵⁰ In other words, all of the inhabitants of heaven can now breathe a sigh of relief knowing that Satan is gone. He is vanquished from heaven forever.

Have you ever had to work around a person or, worse yet, worship with a person whose goal in life is to make you miserable, whose goal in life is to slander you and criticize you and abuse you? Do you remember the day that that wicked person was removed? Multiply that abuse and subsequent celebration a million fold and you will just barely begin to approximate the jubilation of this heavenly throng of worshippers.

But the end of verse 12, “Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.”⁵¹ Yes, he is permanently expelled from heaven, thrown down to earth and, no doubt, the earth is surrounded or will be surrounded at this time by a host of angelic forces to keep all of them on earth, but now Satan will be consumed with fury having great wrath, knowing his time is short, the final three and a half years where he will vent his spleen on Israel and all who belong to God.

Again, keep in mind Satan’s number one priority at this time will be to prevent the establishment of the kingdom by eliminating the people of promise. Notice verse 13. “And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child,”⁵² referring to Israel. But, beloved, he will not succeed.

I close with this thought. The *Guinness Book of Records* lists the Jews as the most ancient minority in the world. No other people group in history have experienced and survived such relentless persecution. But this is not some curious coincidence, beloved. Like the burning bush that could not be consumed out of which the Lord promised Moses that he would deliver his suffering people from the oppression of Egypt, Israel’s sojourn through history would likewise be lived in the flames of suffering. But they will never be consumed. God is faithful to his covenant promises. And, beloved, please hear this. God’s faithfulness to his ancient covenant people is a glorious picture of his faithfulness to us. So we rejoice in these wonderful truths.

Let’s bow our heads together.

⁵⁰ Revelation 12:12.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Revelation 12:13.

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Father, we praise you. We thank you for your Word. Apply it to our heart. Cause us to live in light of the coming of your glory and bring special conviction to those who do not know you as Savior. Oh Lord, overwhelm them with the guilt of their sin that they might run to you for the forgiveness that you will give. I ask this in your precious name. Amen.

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