

## Revelation 12, Satan's Warfare

*“A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. . . she was about to give birth. Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads . . . the dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. . . And there was war in heaven . . . the great dragon was hurled down – that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. . . When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child . . . then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring – those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”*

Every commentary and every Bible expositor (except ideologically-driven liberal ones) acknowledges that this unique chapter surveys the story line of the Bible. It's a story of warfare, the great dragon against the Nation of Israel, against Israel's Messiah, and against the followers of Israel's Messiah. The chapter is here in the Book of Revelation because the red dragon, Satan, is in a rage because he fears his time is short. He's about to be chained in the abyss, humiliated and then punished for his wickedness. But while he has time, he is going to battle against God as fiercely as he can, so readers are here being warned of the extreme danger he poses. But this chapter is also useful to us to understand what's going on in the background of Scripture as well as what's happening before our eyes today.

Whatever proud Satan may think about himself, he's not deity. He's a created being, God's servant, and he's bound to obey God. He cannot create, and he cannot judge or condemn anyone. He can kill and destroy, though. And he's exceedingly powerful and full of hate. He acts by tempting God's beloved humans to do evil so that, according to the moral law of retribution, God must condemn and punish those He loves. That has been his basic strategy throughout biblical history, from that fateful day in the Garden (Genesis 3) on.

Because of rebellion against God, the choice of wanting to experience evil rather than good by not obeying God, God gave humanity a sin nature. It was a judicial act that resulted in humans being alienated from a holy God. The rest of Scripture documents the outworking of our enslavement to sin and God's mission of grace in reconciling humanity to Himself. At the Tower of Babel episode because of persistent rebellion against God despite the awareness of God's fierce judgment (the Flood), God gave all the offspring of Noah over to Satan to rule them. But to preserve His testimony, God began another work, calling first Patriarchs then the Nation of Israel to bring reconciliation and blessing to humanity through a Messiah. The work of Messiah would be to defeat Satan and his works, indeed, to defeat all evil. He would also overcome for us the power of the sin nature and impart righteousness, life and blessing to the world. Satan's rule and his future depended (and still does) on preventing the Messiah from coming (again).

Although Satan isn't mentioned in the Pentateuch after Genesis 3, we should understand he was at work in the background, trying to prevent the “woman clothed with the sun” from appearing. So, for example, had Esau been successful in getting revenge on Jacob (Chapter 33), there might never have been an Israel. We should read the O.T. thru this lens of Satan warring against Israel. Thus Satan instigated the Golden Calf episode in the full expectation that God would be so appalled that He'd wipe out Israel altogether. Thus the period of the Judges was so sordid, because Satan was busily making Israel so offensive, God would have to abandon them – or so Satan expected.

In the days of the Monarchy and Second Temple, Satan had one primary objective and another that was secondary. His secondary objective was to continue to make God's people odious to Him thru idolatry, faithlessness, and disobedience to His Law, so that God would have to punish them. If God punished His own beloved Israel, Satan laughed. Satan probably believed that a condemned Israel could not thus bring forth the Messiah. His primary and main objective was to prevent Messiah from coming. That's because Satan knew from the Scriptures that Messiah would come to defeat him; so to avoid that defeat, he did all he could to prevent that Advent. Thus murderous Athaliah did what she could to bring the line of David to an end. And she almost succeeded. Thus Nebuchadnezzar did what he could in the attempt to wipe out Judah. Thus Antiochus Epiphanes did all he could to wipe out Judah. Thus Herod did what he could to destroy the baby Jesus. In every instance, God moved to protect His plan to save humanity.

Now, during the Church Age, what's Satan's objective? Messiah came and fulfilled His mission, but left the world in the care of His followers for them to continue His work. But Jesus very clearly stated that He'd return. Satan can read the New Testament too. So now Satan has a two-fold primary or main objective. That is, first wipe out the Nation of Israel. Second, prevent the church from evangelizing. Why? Satan understands better than we do that if there's no nation of Israel, Jesus cannot come back. He has to return to His people Israel, and if there's no Israel to come back to, He won't,

indeed, can't return. So Satan would securely continue to rule the world. And Satan needs to prevent the church from evangelizing because he knows full well that the time of the Return depends on when all the elect through all the centuries of the Church Age are brought into the Church. If the Church is never complete, the Return never occurs. Satan wins. Let's discuss these in a bit more detail.

I Now we understand the essence of anti-Semitism. It's the deliberate work of Satan to block Israel from existing. If they're scattered across the world, that's OK because at least there's no nation for Christ to return to, but it's not ideal. Better the Jews should be in one location where they can be annihilated in one action. The Nazis were Satan's agents to wipe out the Jews. Their goal was not merely the Jews in Europe but, if their conquests were successful, thru alliances with other nations it was their intent to apprehend every Jew and kill him. That attempt failed, but Satan then arranged for the nation of Israel to be founded. He prevented the Russian ambassador to the United Nations from attending that fateful day to block the vote on the Israel mandate, so in 1947 the Nation of Israel was formed. Now the Jews are all concentrated in one place, an ideal way for the nations of the world to annihilate them.

Anti-semitism is what Satan uses to keep the nations of the world antagonistic toward Israel. The goal of using the surrounding Muslim people to wipe out all Jews in Israel is only one prong in Satan's strategy. The real goal is to get the nations of the world to so fully hate Israel that they will all participate in Israel's annihilation. Consider how quickly and extensively hatred of Israel has very recently permeated our colleges and universities, Congress, black leaders, woke leaders, and elites in all our institutions. Satan has clearly done this; his fingerprints are all over the depraved movement. Satan knows power. He understands the need. That's what's going on right now. The issue of China and Taiwan is peripheral. The issue of Russia and Ukraine is peripheral. Our focus should be on Israel.

II Satan's other great work in the world is to undermine the Church. If Christians won't evangelize the world, then the Church remains forever incomplete, so Christ will never return. We in church circles suppose that Satan's work in the world is promoting sin. That's true. But unbelievers are already sinners and if they engage in pornography or homosexuality or New Age baloney or whatever . . . So what? They were already condemned. Satan's work is primarily directed at Christians! He wants – no, *needs* – Christians to live in a bubble of indifference to God's will so that evangelism does not occur. Is he successful?

The churches of America are Satan's playground. We in the evangelical churches are either so self-absorbed or distracted by other things that we're oblivious to the revealed will of God. We think we know the Scriptures and theology but what we know fails to change us. Yes, some of us are concerned about missions, as long as it's someone else who's actually doing it. Money goes to missions in the hope and expectation that there are missionaries doing the work. But there's no personal involvement because Satan knows how to keep us from it. We keep the Gospel within the walls of our church buildings where no unbeliever can hear it.

Consider this: Believers today in countries of the world where they are persecuted for their faith bear testimony to Jesus despite the risk. They share the Gospel, plant churches, and suffer horribly for it. Yet we here in America, where there's boundless freedom and massive wealth, health and free time, refuse to evangelize. How do we explain this? Perhaps there are sociological reasons, but the most compelling explanation in my thinking is, Satan has us in his pocket. There was great zeal for missions and missionary outreach in the Western church during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. That's over now. We lead purposeless lives now, distracted by all manner of issues, and we seem strangely indifferent to God's biblical commands. The best explanation is, Satan is at war with us, and we're oblivious to it. But wait! Aren't there lots of other ways that Satan attacks the Church? Yes, of course. Fear of the consequences (that Satan instigates) serves to prevent believers from sharing their faith, and persecution of Christians prevents unbelievers from wanting to respond to the Gospel. The red dragon also keeps us infatuated with the things of this world and with a host of other matters that seem important to us. And there are other methods he knows work well. But keeping us, American believers, from evangelizing those around us and around the world is his primary (and most successful, I suspect) work. We are supposed to be conquering Satan (Romans 16:20), not hiding our faith (except in the safety of a church building).

My concluding thoughts: Anti-semitism and hatred of Israel is open rebellion against God, and it calls down the curse of Genesis 12:3. The terrible judgments described in the Book of Revelation are deserved and surely imminent. We live right now in an exceedingly dangerous world. The enraged dragon heightens the dangers that confront us. But nothing is more dangerous than God's indignation at the Church's refusal to do His revealed will. If we love God, if we're grateful to Christ for all He's done for us and will do for us, our response to Him should be to do what He's commanded us to do, and leave the consequences to Him.