

Better Way Apostolic Church- Bible Class

Subject: Knowing Satan Strategies: Revelation 12:1-10

The stage is now set for the dramatic appearance of "the beast," Satan's masterpiece, the false Christ who will control the world.

Revelation 12-13 introduces us to the three key characters in the drama of the last half of the Tribulation: Satan the dragon, the false Christ, and the false prophet. These three are, in a sense, an evil opposing the true God and His people on earth. While these events will be of special significance to God's people at that time, the message of these two chapters can encourage suffering saints during any age.

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.

The adversary always works through human means, in this case, "the beast" (false Christ or Antichrist) and the false prophet, Satan is an imitator, a counterfeiter, and he seeks to control men by means of deception "The beast" is the future world dictator who promises to solve the pressing problems of the nations; the false prophet is his "propaganda minister." For a time, it appears that the satanic trio is succeeding; but then their world empire begins to collapse, the nations assemble for one final battle, Jesus Christ appears, and the battle is over.

We must learn Satan's strategies: The Deceiver

"He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies." John 8:44 And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world. Revelation 12:9 But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by

His craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. 2 Corinthians 11:3 For many deceivers have gone out into the world.

2 John 1:7 now the serpent was craftier than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, as God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'"

The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden, we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. Genesis 3:1-7

Satan's Target – Your Mind

When Satan wanted to lead the first man and woman into sin, he started by attacking the woman's mind. This is made clear in 2 Corinthians 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. KJV

Why would Satan want to attack the mind? Because your mind is the part of the image of God where God communicates with you and reveals his will to you. It is unfortunate that some Christians have minimized the significance of the mind, because the Bible emphasizes its importance.

God renews our lives by renewing our minds, and he renews our mind through his truth. This truth is the Word of God.

Satan's Weapon- Lies

Satan came to Eve as the serpent, the subtle deceiver. It is important that you notice the steps Satan took in getting Eve to believe his lie.

1. He questioned God's Word
2. He denied God's word
3. He substituted His own lie

Satan's Purpose- To make you ignorant of God's will

Satan attacks God's Word because God's Word reveals God's will.

Your Defense- The Inspired Word of God

Only the inspired Word of God can reveal and defeat the devil's lies. You cannot reason with Satan, nor (as Eve discovered) can you even safely converse with him. Man's wisdom is no match for Satan's cunning. Our only defense is the inspired Word of God.

The Dragon (Rev. 12)

John's vision opens with two wonders in heaven (Revelation 12:1-6). The first is a woman giving birth to a son. Since this child is identified as Jesus Christ (compare Revelation 12:5 with Revelation 19:15 and Psalms 2:9), this symbolic woman can be none other than the nation Israel. It was through Israel that Jesus Christ came into the world (Romans 1:3; 9:4-5). By further comparing the description in Revelation 12:1 with Genesis 37:9-10, the identification seems certain.

In the Old Testament, Israel is often compared to a woman, and even a woman in travail (Isaiah 54:5; 66:7; Jeremiah 3:6-10; Micah 4:10; 5:2-3). The apostate world system is compared to a harlot (Revelation 17:1), and the church to a pure bride (Revelation 19:7).

The son is born and is then caught up to the throne of God (Revelation 12:5). We have symbolized here the birth of Christ and His victorious ascension, but nothing is said about either His life or His death. The colon in the middle of the verse represents thirty-three years of history!

The woman with child is the first wonder; the great red dragon is the second. Revelation 12:9 makes it clear that this is Satan. The color red is associated with death (Revelation 6:4) and Satan is a murderer (John 8:44). The heads, horns, and crowns will appear again in Revelation 13:1 and 17:3. The heads represent mountains (Revelation 17:9), and the horns represent kings (Revelation 17:12). We shall study the meaning of these symbols in more detail later.

The dragon was cast out of heaven (Revelation 12:9), and he took with him a third of the angels (Revelation 12:7,9). They are spoken of as "stars" in Revelation 12:4 (see also Daniel 8:10). This is evidently a reference to the fall of Satan (Isaiah 14:12-15), when he and his hosts revolted against God. However, the casting out described in Revelation 12:7-10 is yet future.

Just as soon as the child was born, Satan tried to destroy Him. This conflict between Satan and "the woman" began soon after man fell (Genesis 3:15). Throughout Old Testament history, Satan tried to prevent the birth of the Redeemer. There was always a "dragon" standing by, waiting to destroy Israel or the ancestors of the Messiah. Pharaoh is called a "dragon" (Ezekiel 29:3), and so is Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 51:34). At one critical point, the royal line was limited to one little boy (2 Kings 11:1-3). When Jesus Christ was born, Satan used King Herod to try to destroy Him (Matthew 2). Satan thought that he had succeeded when he used Judas to betray the Lord and hand Him over to be crucified. But the Cross was actually Satan's defeat! "And they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 12:11).

Even today Satan has access to heaven, where he accuses God's people; but he cannot dethrone the exalted Saviour. His strategy is to persecute God's people and devour them if possible (1 Peter 5:8). He has a special hatred for the Jewish people and has been the power behind anti-Semitism from the days of Pharaoh and Haman (see the Book of Esther) to Hitler and Stalin. Finally, in the middle of the Tribulation, there will come a wave of anti-Semitism such as the world has never seen (Revelation 12:6). But God will protect His people during those three-and-a-half years (1,260 days; see Revelation 11:2; 13:5).

Apart from the 144,000 (who are sealed and protected), a believing remnant of Jews will survive this very troublesome time. We are not told where God will protect them or who it is that will care for them. Matthew 24:15-21 will take on special meaning for those believing Jews who live in the end days. Note especially the parenthesis in Revelation 12:15.

You and I are involved in a similar conflict today (Ephesians 6:10). **Satan is out to destroy the church, and our victory can come only through Jesus Christ.**

The next scene in this cosmic drama is a war in heaven (Revelation 12:7-12). Scripture makes it clear that Satan has access to heaven even today (Job 1-2). Once he was the highest of God's angels, but he rebelled against God and was cast down (Isaiah 14:12-15). Interestingly, as God's church faithfully serves Christ and wins the lost, Satan is also cast down and defeated (Luke 10:1-2,17-20; Matthew 16:18; note also 12:29).

Of course, when Jesus Christ died on the cross, it meant Satan's ultimate defeat (John 12:31-33). Satan will one day be cast out of heaven (Revelation 12:7-10), and then finally cast into hell (Revelation 20:10).

What is this celestial conflict all about? The fact that Michael led God's angels to victory is significant, because Michael is identified with the nation Israel (Daniel 10:10-21; 12:1; note also Jude 9). The

name Michael means "who is like God?" and this certainly parallels Satan's egocentric attack on Jehovah - "I will be like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:14). Apparently, the devil's hatred of Israel will spur him to make one final assault against the throne of God, but he will be defeated by Michael and a heavenly host.

But perhaps there is another factor involved in this war. After the church is taken to heaven, believers will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and have their works examined. On the basis of this judgment, rewards will be given (Romans 14:10-12; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10-11). It seems likely that Satan will be present at this event and will accuse the saints, pointing out all the "spots and wrinkles" in the church (Ephesians 5:24-27).

The name devil means "accuser," and Satan means "adversary." Satan stands at the throne of God and fights the saints by accusing them (see Job 1-2; Zechariah 3:1). But Jesus Christ, the "heavenly Advocate" (1 John 2:1-2), represents the church before God's holy throne. 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.

How furious Satan will be when the church comes forth in glory "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." When the accuser sees that his tactics have failed, he will become angry and threaten the very peace of heaven.

How does this future war apply to the church today? The same serpent who accuses the saints in heaven also deceives the nations on earth (Revelation 12:9); and one of his strategies is to lie about the church. He deceives the nations into thinking that the people of God are dangerous, deluded, even destructive. It is through Satan's deception that the leaders of the nations band together against Christ and His people (Psalms 2; Acts 4:23-30). God's people in every age must expect the world's opposition, but the church can always defeat the enemy by being faithful to Jesus Christ.

Christ's shed blood gives us our perfect standing before God (1 John 1:5-2:2). But our witness to God's Word and our willingness to lay down our lives for Christ defeats Satan as well. 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" (Revelation 12:10), if we are yielded to Him. God's great purposes will be fulfilled!

Believers in any age or situation can rejoice in this victory, no matter how difficult their experiences may be. Our warfare is not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of the wicked one; and these have been defeated by our Saviour (Ephesians 6:10 ff, note also Ephesians 1:15-23).

Heaven will rejoice when Satan is cast out, but the earth-dwellers will not, for the last half of the Tribulation will mean intense suffering for the world. The "woe" in Revelation 12:12 reminds us of the "three woes" referred to in Revelation 8:13. The first "woe" is described in Revelation 9:1-12, and the second in Revelation 9:13-21. The third "woe" is referred to in Revelation 11:14 ff, but this passage only summarizes the events that will climax God's plan for the earth. It may be that part of this third "woe" is casting out Satan and permitting his terrible wrath on earth.

This, then, is the third scene in the drama: Satan's wrath on earth (Revelation 12:13-16). Knowing that his time is short, and having no more access to heaven, the adversary must vent all of his anger earthward. He begins with Israel (the woman), and creates a wave of anti-Semitism. Satan has always hated the Jews because they are God's chosen people and the vehicle through which salvation came into the world. Satan would like to destroy the nation, particularly as the time draws near for the Messiah to return to earth to establish the promised kingdom. A Jewish remnant must be ready to receive Him and form the nucleus for the kingdom (Zechariah 12:9-14:21; Revelation 1:7).

God will prepare a special place where the Jewish remnant will be protected and cared for. It is interesting that the remnant's escape from Satan is described in terms of a flying eagle, for this is a repeated image in the Old Testament with reference to Israel. God delivered Israel from Egypt "on eagles' wings" (Exodus 19:4), and cared for the people in the wilderness as an eagle would her young (Deuteronomy 32:11-12). Their return from Babylonian Captivity was like "mounting up with wings as eagles" (Isaiah 40:31).

Note that the remnant will be sheltered for the last half of the Tribulation. We do not know where this sheltered place will be, nor do we need to know. But the lesson for all of us is clear. God cares for those whom HE! wants to use to accomplish His purposes on earth. True, some people will give their lives (Revelation 12:11), but others will be spared (see Acts 12 for an example of this principle).

The phrase "water as a flood" is not explained, but there is a parallel in Psalms 124. (Also note the phrase "escaped as a bird" in verse 7 of this same Psalm.) This "flood" is probably an outpouring of hatred and anti-Semitic propaganda. Or it may symbolize armies that invade Israel and seek to defeat the remnant. If that is the meaning, then the earth opening up could well be an earthquake that God sends to destroy the invaders. When Satan discovers that the people he seeks to kill are protected, then he turns on those who were not carried to the hidden place of safety. He will declare war, and God will permit him to have victory for a time (Revelation 13:7); but ultimately, the old serpent will be defeated.