

## **SIX INSIGHTS ABOUT SATAN**

**Revelation 12:1-18**

**By Andy Manning**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The Reformer Martin Luther said that the three enemies of the Christian life includes the world, the flesh, and the devil.
2. Many people don't believe in a devil. They equate the devil fairies, and goblins, and Leprechauns, and unicorns. While the Bible doesn't affirm the existence of those things, it does teach the existence of a devil.
3. **R.C. Sproul** "Satan is a supernatural being who has the capacity to influence people for evil."
4. Satan is the great enemy of our souls. He is extremely powerful and intelligent. And if you are to live a successful Christian life, you must learn to resist him.
5. **Randy Alcorn** "Satan is out to get you. If he can't take you to hell, he'll do his best to make your life a hell on earth."
6. Revelation 12 has a great deal to say about Satan, perhaps more than any other chapter in the Bible. It calls Satan the great dragon, the ancient serpent, the devil, Satan, the one who deceives the whole world, the accuser.
7. In this sermon we will learn who Satan is, and how we can defeat him.

### **II. RECAP**

1. In the first three verses of Revelation we are told that the book is about things that "must soon take place" because "the time is near." For this reason, we are looking for a near-time fulfillment of Revelation rather than an end-times fulfillment. I have been interpreting Revelation from a preterist (past), rather than a futurist perspective.
2. Before Jesus died, in a sermon called the Olivet Discourse, He prophesied about the impending destruction of Israel, and He said it would occur in that generation (Mt 24:30). This was fulfilled about forty years later in AD 70 when the Romans completely destroyed Jerusalem and the temple.
3. There is strong evidence that the book of Revelation was written before the destruction of Jerusalem (perhaps around AD 65). If that is the case, then it could be that Revelation is talking about the events leading up to and including the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, and that is the interpretation we are taking. Revelation is about God's judgment on Israel for rejecting the Messiah and persecuting His followers, and then taking a new bride for Himself, the church.
4. In Revelation 5 God is seated on the throne as judge, holding out a scroll with seven seals. The scroll is believed to be God's divorce certificate against Israel.
5. As Jesus opens the seals of the scroll one at a time, John sees visions of terrible judgment to be poured out on Israel.

6. When Jesus opens the seventh seal, John sees seven angels are given seven trumpets. When each angel blows a trumpet, John sees more visions of impending doom for Israel. All of the seal and trumpet judgments point toward the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70.
7. In Revelation 12 Jesus is going to reveal a new character in the story – Satan. How does Satan fit into the first century, and what is he up to today?

### III. SIX INSIGHTS ABOUT SATAN

#### 1. Satan's goal.

- i. **Revelation 12:1-4** A great 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. 2 She was pregnant and cried out in labor and agony as she was about to give birth. 3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: There was a great fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on its heads were seven crowns. 4 Its tail swept away a third of the stars in heaven and hurled them to the earth. And the dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she did give birth it might devour her child.
- ii. This passage introduces two characters: a woman and a dragon.
- iii. First Character: A Woman.
  1. The text tells us two things:
    - a. She is clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head (12:1).
    - b. She was pregnant and cried out in labor and agony as she was about to give birth (12:2).
  2. Who is the woman?
    - a. The woman is faithful Israel, believing Israel, through whom the Messiah would come.
      - i. We know the woman is Israel because the crown of twelve stars on her head represent the twelve tribes of Israel.
      - ii. Joseph had a dream in which the sun and moon represented Jacob and Rachel, and the twelve stars represented the twelve sons of Jacob (Gen 37:9).
    - b. When God called Abraham, He promised to not only make Him into a great nation, but to bless all world through His descendants (Gen 12:1-3). Over the centuries many Jews abandoned God, but there was always a remnant through whom God was able to continue His work and fulfill His purpose.
    - c. At this point in the text, faithful Israel is pregnant, about to give birth to the Messiah.

- d. In one sense the woman represents Mary, the mother of Jesus, but it also represents faithful Israel.
- iv. Second Character: A Dragon.
  - 1. Verse 9 tells us plainly that the dragon is called the devil and Satan.
  - 2. The text says three things about Satan:
    - a. Fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on its heads were seven crowns (12:3).
      - i. This presents his great authority on earth.
      - ii. The Bible calls Satan the god of this world (2 Cor 4:4).
      - iii. He is pulling the strings, leading entire nations to sin, to destroy each other, and to persecute Christians.
    - b. Its tail swept away a third of the stars in heaven and hurled them to the earth (12:4).
      - i. Some theologians believe that the stars represent angels. When Satan rebelled against God, he took a third of the angels with him, which we now know as demons.
    - c. He stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she did give birth it might devour her child (Rev 12:4).
      - i. Here we see Satan's goal – to kill the Messiah as soon as He was born.
      - ii. Satan attempted this through King Herod. When Christ was born, King Herod attempted to kill Him. He gave orders to massacre all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under (Mt 2:16).
      - iii. But as we're about to see, Satan failed.
  - 3. This is a reminder that Satan is a ruthless enemy. His goal is to steal, kill, and destroy (Jn 10:10). He is real, and He is dangerous.

## 2. Satan's defeat.

- i. **Revelation 12:5-6** 5 She gave birth to a Son, a male who is going to rule all nations with an iron rod. Her child was caught up to God and to his throne. 6 The woman fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared by God, to be nourished there for 1,260 days.
- ii. Here we're introduced to a new character: The child.
- iii. The text says two things about the Son:
  - 1. He is going to rule all nations with an iron rod (12:5). This tells us that the child is Jesus. This is a reference to Psalm 2, a Messianic Psalm which predicted that the Messiah would rule the nations with an iron scepter.

2. He was caught up to God and to his throne (Rev 12:5). This passage skips over Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, and goes right to His ascension. When He ascended, He sat down on the throne in heaven. The point is not to minimize the cross and resurrection, but to emphasize Christ's victory over Satan.
- iv. Satan's goal was to kill Jesus as soon as He was born, but He failed. Jesus went on to be the king of kings and Lord of lords.
- v. This is a reminder that Satan can be defeated. He doesn't always win. He doesn't have to win. We don't have to fall prey to his lies and temptations. Just as Christ defeated Him in the desert, we can defeat him too. Ephesians 6 says that we can stand against his schemes (6:11), we can resist him in the evil day (6:13), and we can extinguish all his flaming arrows (6:16).
- vi. **1 John 4:4** "... the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world."
- vii. **Revelation 12:6** "The woman fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared by God, to be nourished there for 1,260 days."
- viii. Now the action switches back to the woman. Sometime after Christ rose and ascended into heaven, the woman fled into the wilderness.
  1. Who is the woman?
    - a. At this point in history, the woman is no longer just faithful Israel; it is the church – those who believe in the Messiah. Before His birth, the woman was faithful Israel who would eventually give birth to the Messiah. After His birth, the woman is the church who follows the Messiah.
  2. Why did the church flee? And why for 1,260 days? When Satan saw that he was defeated by Christ, he turned his attention against the church.
  3. This was fulfilled in the Jewish War. Before Christ died, He warned His followers, that He was going to destroy Jerusalem, but He also told them how to protect themselves.
  4. He told them, "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that I'm about to destroy it. That's your sign to run for it. (Lk 21:20-21).
  5. At the beginning of the Jewish War in AD 66, Cestius, the Roman governor of Syria, surrounded Jerusalem with an army of 30,000. Just as he was about to defeat the Jewish resistance, for no apparent reason he retreated. The thousands of Christians living in Jerusalem at the time saw this as a fulfillment of Christ's prophecy, so they fled Jerusalem to live in Pella, a city about sixty miles north of Jerusalem. Over the next 1,260 days, or three and a half years, the devil unleashed his army of demons to possess the Jews in Jerusalem.

There was constant civil war in the city, and many people lost their lives, but the Christians were spared.

### 3. Satan's fall.

- i. **Revelation 12:7-12** 7 Then war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels also fought, 8 but he could not prevail, and there was no place for them in heaven any longer. 9 So the great dragon was thrown out—the ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the one who deceives the whole world. He was thrown to earth, and his angels with him. 10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say,  
The salvation and the power  
and the kingdom of our God  
and the authority of his Christ  
have now come,  
because the accuser of our brothers and sisters,  
who accuses them  
before our God day and night,  
has been thrown down.  
11 They conquered him  
by the blood of the Lamb  
and by the word of their testimony;  
for they did not love their lives  
to the point of death.  
12 Therefore rejoice, you heavens,  
and you who dwell in them!  
Woe to the earth and the sea,  
because the devil has come down to you  
with great fury,  
because he knows his time is short.
- ii. This section does not follow the previous section chronologically, but is given as an explanation for why the dragon turns on the woman, causing her to flee into the wilderness. In other words, this doesn't happen after the woman flees into the wilderness; it actually happens before. Don't be misled by the word "Then" at the beginning of verse 7, "Then war broke out..." That can be translated, "Now war broke out," or "And there was war in heaven," or "A war broke out in heaven."
- iii. This section introduces a new character named Michael. It says...
  1. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon (12:7).
  2. The dragon was defeated and thrown out of heaven (12:9).
  3. A voice in heaven praises God and says that the accuser, who accuses believers day and night, has been thrown out (12:10).
- iv. Many commentators believe that Michael is a metaphor for Jesus.

1. The name "Michael" (meaning Who is like God?) appears only here, in Daniel, and in Jude.
2. **David Chilton** "Michael is portrayed in Daniel as "the great Prince" who stands as the special Protector of the people of God. War breaks out in heaven between the good and evil angels, and even Gabriel is unable to overcome the demons until Michael comes to do battle with the enemy (Dan. 10: 12-13, 20-21)... The closing passage of Daniel's prophecy refers to Michael as the Guardian over God's people, who will arise to fight on their behalf during a time of great tribulation, saving all whose names are written in the Book of Life (Dan. 12: 1)."
3. Jude calls Michael the archangel. **David Chilton** writes that the term archangel "does not necessarily mean "member of a superior class of angels," but rather simply "the Chief of the angels," an expression equivalent to "Captain of the Lord's hosts" (Josh. 5: 13-15). This would also tend to identify Michael with the Angel of the Lord (cf. Ex. 23: 20-23), a figure who is, in most cases, a preincarnate appearance of Christ."
  - v. Either ways, after Christ died, rose, and ascended to heaven, a war broke out between Michael and Satan, and Satan lost and was thrown out.
  - vi. Keep in mind, this is not talking about Satan's original fall when he ceased being an angel. The Bible tells us that even after Satan became God's enemy, he still had an audience with God. In the book of Job, Satan meets regularly with God in heaven to do one thing: accuse God's people. He accuses Job of being weak, and insincere, and in essence a fake. This is what He did. He is the accuser, constantly accusing God's people of sin.
  - vii. But as a result of this war, Satan was thrown out. The accuser lost his place in heaven. He no longer has access to God.
  - viii. **Revelation 12:10** "Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say, The salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have now come, because the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been thrown down."
  - ix. Jesus predicted this would happen.
  - x. **John 12:31** "Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out."
  - xi. Before Christ, Satan had an audience with God, where he constantly accused and slandered God's people. But after Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, the accuser was thrown out of heaven. Satan is no longer accusing us before God.
  - xii. But then verse 12 tell us what Satan did as a result.

- xiii. **Revelation 12:12** “Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you with great fury, because he knows his time is short.”
- xiv. Once the devil defeated and thrown out of heaven, he knew his days were numbered. As a result, he turned his attention to the church “with great fury.” This played out in the book of Acts as the Jews persecuted the Christians, and it is why the Christians had to flee to the wilderness.

#### 4. Satan’s limits.

- i. **Revelation 12:13-16** 13 When the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who had given birth to the male child. 14 The woman was given two wings of a great eagle, so that she could fly from the serpent’s presence to her place in the wilderness, where she was nourished for a time, times, and half a time. 15 From his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river flowing after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. 16 But the earth helped the woman. The earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the river that the dragon had spewed from his mouth.
- ii. Now that we know why, the vision now returns to the woman (the church). When Satan saw that he had be thrown out of heaven, he persecuted the church, and the church fled.
- iii. God gave her the wings of an eagle to fly to the wilderness (12:14). When God rescued the Jews from the Egyptians, he carried them on eagles’ wings (Ex 19:4).
- iv. Again, this refers to the beginning of the Jewish War when the Christians in Jerusalem fled to the city of Pella for the duration of the war, or three and a half years, or a time, times, and half a time (a year, plus two years, plus half a year).
- v. Verse 15 says Satan’s persecution against the church was like a river, but the earth helped the woman by swallowing up the river. Remember that the Greek word for “earth” can be translated “land.” Instead of Satan’s fury being unleashed on the church, who fled Jerusalem, his fury was unleashed on the land of Israel – on the Jews in Jerusalem. Over a million Jews were killed in the war.
- vi. This is reminder of Satan’s limits. Satan tried to wipe out the church, but God didn’t let him. Satan is a created being, less powerful than God, and limited by God’s sovereignty. He can only do what God allows.
- vii. One of the things that God doesn’t allow Satan to do is to possess Christians. He cannot enter you and control you. Some people think that Christians can be demon possessed, but that’s not true. Christians can be demon oppressed (tempted and tried), but never demon possessed. He cannot enter you, and He cannot control you. As a Christian, God the Holy Spirit lives in You. You are possessed by God. You are inhabited by God. The devil cannot possess you.

## 5. Satan's work.

- i. **Revelation 12:17-18** 17 So the dragon was furious with the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring,—those who keep the commands of God and hold firmly to the testimony about Jesus. 18 The dragon stood on the sand of the sea.
- ii. Once Satan saw that the Christians in Jerusalem had fled to Pella, he turned his attention to the church at large around the world. That includes you and me.
- iii. Before the Jewish War it was the Jews who persecuted the Christians. But right before the Jewish War, in AD 64, the Roman Emperor Nero declared war on the Christians. They were labeled enemies of the state. There was a great fire in Rome in 64 AD. Some believe that Nero started it on purpose so he could rebuild the city in his own image. But when people started to blame him, he turned the blame on Christians. But who was really behind the Roman persecution of Christians? Satan.
- iv. From then on Satan has been at war with Christians. First, he tries to tempt us to sin so that we break God's heart and are less useful to God. Second, he tries to intimidate us with persecution so that we will hide from the world rather than reach the world. But this chapter tells us how to defeat Satan.
- v. **Revelation 12:11** "They conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; for they did not love their lives to the point of death."
- vi. Three ways we defeat Satan:
  1. Salvation: "the blood of the lamb." Satan cannot possess and control us because through the blood of Jesus we are bought and possessed by the Spirit of God.
  2. Service: "the word of their testimony." We will reach the world by continuing to preach the gospel.
  3. Sacrifice: "they did not love their lives to the point of death." We are devoted to pleasing God and serving God, no matter the cost.

## IV. CONCLUSION

1. **Hank Hanegraaff** "[The devil] is pleased when we suppose he is everywhere – or imagine he is nowhere at all; when we think he can control us against our wills, or envision he cannot influence us at all."
2. In other words, there are two mistakes we can make when it comes to Satan – assuming he has more power than he does, or assuming he is powerless.
3. If you believe that Satan can possess and control you, then you can blame your sinfulness and foolishness on him rather than taking responsibility and repenting.
4. If you believe that he is powerless, then you won't strive to put on the full armor of God which are necessary to defeat him (Eph 6:10-18).