

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

The Invisible War **Revelation 12**

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PowerPoint Presentation included: None

SermonAudio Blurb: In this interlude John pulls back the veil that hides the great battle that is occurring around us. A spiritual battle between Satan and angels. A battle that exerts forces upon this world and the people in it, often while we remain unaware.

I. Introduction.

- A. Today we come to a rather strange sounding passage, even for the book of Revelation. Read all of chapter 12.
 - 1. We are still not back into the flow of events leading to the end. This is still the interlude.
 - 2. What is going on here is the description of the hidden forces that are behind this climax of events.
 - 3. This makes this section very powerful because it is the pulling away of the curtain of life and allows us to see some things that are often forgotten in the midst of life and hardship.
- B. Main points to note:
 - 1. In this vision there are great signs in heaven.
 - 2. Key players in the visions:
 - a. A woman.
 - b. A child.
 - c. A dragon.
 - d. Michael the archangel.
 - 3. There are also several events that flow through and around these key persons.
 - a. An attempt to kill the boy who was born.
 - b. The hiding of the woman.
 - c. A great war in heaven with the angels and demons.

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- d. The casting out of heaven of Satan.
 - e. The great hatred of the dragon toward this woman and humanity in general.
 - f. The divine care for this woman.
- C. In all of this we have a lot of symbolism present.
- D. Breaks down into the following way:
- 1. The woman who gives birth (1-6).
 - 2. The heavenly war (7-12).
 - 3. The hatred of the dragon against God's people (13-17).
- E. One of the most important things to keep in mind as we go through this passage is that this chapter covers massive amounts of time, sometimes within the same sentence.

II. The Invisible War.

- A. The woman who gives birth (1-6).
- 1. There are two specific "signs" in this section.
 - a. These proceed from the great "storm" in heaven in 11:19, where the Temple is opened.
 - b. The idea of this term, "sign" tells us that what each of the signs describe are symbolic but also that they are significant and careful attention should be paid, hence the term "great sign."
 - 2. Who is she? Several views:
 - a. A cult like the Christian Science take it to mean their founder, Mary Baker Eddy.
 - b. Some see her as Eve giving birth to humanity and ultimately Jesus Christ.
 - c. The RCC sees it as Mary.
 - (1) This can be tempting if we only consider vss 1-2.
 - (2) But then you are forced to explain vs 17 where she is found to have other children, which is denied in the strongest of ways by the RCC
 - d. The best view sees it as referring to Israel.

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- (1) As we go through the rest of the chapter this will become more obvious. But it is worth mentioning that in the Old Testament it is very common, especially in the prophetic books to speak of Israel as a woman.
 - (2) Note the imagery of the sun, moon and stars, they should remind you of something from the Old Testament (Genesis 37:9-11).
 - (a) In that passage the sun was Jacob, the moon was Rachel and the 11 stars were his other brothers.
 - (b) Here the vision then brings that image of the very beginnings of Israel forward in time to a specific moment.
3. Her condition:
- a. She is in great pain. This again is a very common image of Israel in the Old Testament, especially in Isaiah.
 - b. Here we see the image of Israel just prior to the coming of Jesus. A nation in travail.
 - c. The imagery is powerful as we see her in great pain. Why? Remembering this is not a literal woman, why the pain?
 - (1) The next series of vss will bring out one aspect of that pain.
 - (2) But there is the idea of how all of human history has been moving toward this moment. Picture the Old Testament and the centrality of Israel. And central to Israel was the promise that out of her would come the Savior, Lord and King.
 - (3) As history moved forward the pregnancy, as it were, develops until we see the birth of Jesus Christ in the gospels.
4. In vss 3-6 we have a gruesome image of Satan, which is a second sign, and we see the true intent of his being and his great hatred for God and God's people.
- a. The heads, horns and crowns.
 - (1) We will deal with this in more detail in chapter 17.
 - (2) Note the close resemblance to Daniel 7:7-8, 19-24.

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- (3) Probably the heads speak of 7 consecutive kingdoms. The last head, if it is truly connecting us back to Daniel, would have the 10 horns.
 - (a) Remember that this type of language has no problem mixing metaphors and imagery. In fact, it tends to heighten the meaning by doing so.
 - (b) The kingdoms are likely Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome and the yet-future kingdom of who is called The Beast.
 - (c) It is worth noting that enemies of Israel in the Old Testament are often described as a dragon. Egypt, Assyria and Babylon all are described in that way.
- (4) Here is the key point to think through. Each of these were massive kingdoms and yet each of them were actually under the power of the dragon.
 - (a) Here is where the curtain is pulled back for us to see and to consider.
 - (b) Here we see a bit more starkly what Paul says in Ephesians 6 that we do not wrestle with flesh and blood but with evil, spiritual forces.
 - (c) Beloved, these are not the only kingdoms of Satan, for He is the god of this age. Every kingdom has Him working behind the scenes to work his woe.
 - (d) but these are specifically drawn out as they are overtly opposed to Israel, more importantly, opposed to the Messiah, Jesus the Christ.
- 5. Stars swept from heaven.
 - a. These are angels, commonly referred to in the Old Testament not to mention 9:1.
 - b. This speaks of the past when Satan is cast from heaven, taking his fallen angels with him.
 - (1) We have mention of this in Luke 10:18 where Jesus had sent out 70 men to proclaim the coming kingdom. They

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were shocked to see demons even having to obey them.
There Jesus said that He was watching Satan fall from
heaven.

- (2) But then in John 12:31 Jesus speaks of this being something still future but tightly connected to His death on the cross.
 - (3) Here in vs 4 it is connected to the birth of Jesus where Satan gathers those angels who will follow him.
 - (4) And then, in vs 7 we have this final war with Michael and here there is the final and total banishment from heaven. That time is still future.
6. The scene now moves fast forward to the time of Christ's birth and the scene is disgusting.
- a. The vision is grotesque in its imagery. The woman is in the stirrups on the birthing bed ready to give birth. And the Dragon is crouched there at the birth canal waiting for the child to eat it.
 - b. It exemplifies the hatred of Satan against the Messiah.
 - c. We often fail to grasp the level of hatred for humanity that flows in the heart of Satan.
 - (1) We are image bearers and we are recipients of God's grace.
 - (2) All the way back in the garden—Genesis 3:15—there is the realization that through a man Satan would be destroyed.
 - (3) Starts his hatred with Cain and Abel.
 - (4) We see an attempt to corrupt the human race in Genesis 6.
 - (5) And from there you can follow the bloody line through the history of Israel.
 - (a) The murder of the male children in Egypt.
 - (b) Haman tries to have them eradicated in Esther.
 - (c) And it leads up to Matthew 2:16.
 - (6) Satan knows the prophecy given in the garden. He knows that through Israel the seed of the woman Who would be his destruction shall come.

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d.

7. The birth (5).

a. Of course his plans are frustrated. They are always, ultimately frustrated. Which is why we are called to not fear him or his powers, but to fear and trust in God.

b. Skips right over the life, death and resurrection.

c. Notice the verb tense regarding the child.

(1) John is seeing it as future, indication that though Christ was enthroned in heaven, that it was not the final aspect of his rule. There was a definite earthward focus to come.

(2) In other words, you could read it this way, “she gave birth to a son, a male, and her child was caught up to God and to His throne [His ascension in Acts 1], and who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron [this is a yet future moment, when Jesus begins to reign on earth].

(3) Remember what we learned last week in the statement in 11:15. Here in 12:5 we are seeing that event again mentioned.

d. So, if Christ is snatched away into heaven, then what is left for the dragon to hate and seek to destroy?

(1) The answer is Israel.

(2) You have another allusion to the Old Testament with Israel fleeing from the dragon, Egypt, by going into the wilderness.

(3) What we have between vs 5 and vs 6 is a large amount of time. It starts at Christ’s return to heaven and it ends sometime in the future during this final part of the 7 years of tribulation.

(4) Vs 6 now moves ahead in time again to the time of the Tribulation. We will pick this point up in vss 13ff.

(5) But note again the time frame given.

(a) 1260 days.

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- (b) Remember 11:1- 3.
 - (c) This time when the nations are trampling the Holy City and these two witnesses are prophesying is also the time where God brings His people, Israel to a place of safety.
- B. The heavenly war (7-12).
 - 1. Here we see a future, final heavenly battle in heaven.
 - 2. Notice who is missing? Only in Revelation 20 does God enter the scene and it is very short and to the point.
 - 3. Michael is a very powerful angel who is uniquely connected to Israel.
 - a. Daniel 10:13, 21. These speak of powerful demons fighting and seeking to frustrate the plans and mission of Michael on behalf of Israel.
 - b. Jude 1:9 speaks of his encounter with Satan over the dead body of Moses.
 - c. But the most important one is in Daniel 12:1 which coincides with our passage.
 - 4. No longer does Satan have any access to heaven.
 - a. Incrementally he is moving toward destruction, but even this is not the final destruction of this evil enemy of ours.
 - b. From the initial fall from heaven, to this casting out, then he shall be locked up in the abyss, ultimately being cast into the lake of fire.
 - 5. To get the sense of how evil he is just consider the names and titles given to him in vs 9.
 - a. Never underestimate this being.
 - b. He is the one who tempted Eve and through his evil sin and death entered our existence.
 - c. “Devil” means to be a slanderer and accuser. He is not on anyone’s side but his own.
 - d. “Satan” is not actually his name. It means “adversary” for that is what he is and that is all he ever will be.

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6. Notice what his reaction is.
 - a. Filled with great wrath.
 - b. Knows he has only a little bit of time.
 - c. We get a glimpse of this in Mark 13:19-20 (have the person keep the bible open to there).

7. Vss 10-12.
 - a. First comes this powerful proclamation again of the kingdom of God and Christ.
 - (1) No longer shall Satan be allowed in heaven.
 - (2) Notice what he is no longer allowed to do, accuse the brethren. Heaven is done with him and his evil.
 - b. In vs 11 what was the answer for overcoming those incessant accusations against the “brethren”— meaning you and me and every other believer throughout time.
 - (1) Your good works?
 - (2) Your faithfulness?
 - (3) Your diligence?
 - (4) Three things: Jesus’ saving work, our testimony that we believe and trust in that work, and the hope of what is to come rather than what is.
 - c. Vs. 12 only the heavens are called to rejoice.
 - (1) This means both heaven proper and the realm of the spiritual beings such as angels and demons.
 - (2) But for those on the earth, it is woe for now it is on the earth that Satan is bound and so there and there alone can he pour out his vile hatred.

- C. The hatred of the dragon against God’s people (13-17).
 1. Here we pick back up with vs 6.
 2. Matthew 24:15ff and Mark 13:14-18 speaks of that time.

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3. God enables Israel to flee from his presence and to a place where he cannot get too. We do not know what, how or where.
4. Remember that not every Israelite is involved here, only those who are now believing in Christ.
5. Satan seeks to drown them.
 - a. Question of whether this is literal or not. If it is literal then we see God supernaturally protecting the people from this flood.
 - b. Certainly possible but I see it as symbolism.
 - (1) Jeremiah 46:7-8 Who is this that rises like the Nile, Like the rivers whose waters surge about? 8 Egypt rises like the Nile, Even like the rivers whose waters surge about; And He has said, "I will rise and cover that land; I will surely destroy the city and its inhabitants."
 - (2) Jeremiah 47:1-2 That which came as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the Philistines, before Pharaoh conquered Gaza. 2 Thus says the LORD: "Behold, waters are going to rise from the north And become an overflowing torrent, And overflow the land and all its fulness, The city and those who live in it; And the men will cry out, And every inhabitant of the land will wail.
 - (3) In other words, Satan shall seek to overwhelm Israel by a great flood of enemies.
6. Who are the others mentioned in vs 17?
 - a. Notice "the rest of her offspring." "Her" is Israel, so those would be Jews.
 - b. Not the unbelieving Jews, but others.
 - c. Best to see these as the 144,000 who were sealed for the purpose of being witnesses during the tribulation.

III. Conclusion.

- A. This incredible interlude continues next week where we see what is often called the unholy trinity.
- B. There is little here that is pleasant and the pace in chapters 12-14 is relentless.

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- C. But understand again what you saw today— it is an invisible war.
1. Behind everything on this earth is the presence and power of Satan.
 2. All the machinations of mankind are but pawns in his hands.
 3. This is what is behind North Korea and behind ISIS.
 4. But it is always what is behind the Democratic and Republican parties.
 5. It is Satan, working and working and working to bring woe and damnation to mankind.
- D. So we see here a glimpse into the work of Satan since his fall to destroy humanity and wage war against heaven.
1. And we see the fury that flows in his heart.
 2. And the way God uses him to accomplish His own will. A junk yard dog on a chain.
- E. And only in Jesus Christ is there any salvation and good and hope.

IV. Benediction/Doxology.

Finally, beloved, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

Small Group Questions

- **What stands out in this section? What did you learn? Why is this chapter even here?**
- **In light of what we learned in vs 3 of this chapter, how should that help you think about our nation and those in our time? What about in our schools? Our workplaces? Our families? Our marriages?**