

“The Wrath of the Dragon”
(3 Things Satan Hates)
 Revelation 12:1-17

Introduction

When I was a little boy I remember asking my mother if it was alright for me to hate the devil. While my mother was not a trained theologian, she was a woman full of wisdom and she knew the kind of answer a little inquisitive boy needed. She told me that we were to love everyone and to hate no one. Recently I was asked in a forum with high school students, “Should we hate the devil and should we pray for him?” It would appear that many are concerned about the soul of the evil one! While my mother’s counsel was in one sense on target, it is nevertheless the case that the Bible does teach us that there are some things we ought to hate. For example, Proverbs 6:16 - 19, “These six things the Lord hates, yes seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.” Now to return to the two questions presented to me by inquisitive high school students. No where does the Bible say that we should pray for Satan. Indeed, his destiny is sealed and therefore there is nothing we could say to God that would alter that in any way. Whether or not we should hate him, the Bible does not say. However, this one thing I am certain of: Satan does hate us. He loves death and destruction, evil and wickedness. He had a huge celebration, I assure you, when terrorism rained down on our nation on September 11, 2001. Yes, Satan hates you and Satan hates me. In fact, in Revelation 12, we discover that there are three things in particular that bring on the wrath of the dragon: The Lord Jesus, the child of God, and the nation of Israel. These three things Satan hates with all of his heart and with all of his passion. This will provide the outline for our study of Revelation 12.

Revelation 12 is something of a panorama of redemptive history. We are going to go both backward and forward as we survey God’s plan of salvation from beginning, to almost the end. The Lord Jesus, the believer, and the nation of Israel will figure prominently in this text, but looming large with respect to each will be the archenemy of God, the devil himself.

Transition

Note with me first of all that our text teaches:

I. Satan hates the Lord Jesus. 12:1-6

Many Bible students have noted that 11:19 is something of a hinge in that it brings chapter 11 to a conclusion, but it also opens the door for the beginning of chapter 12. The lightnings, noises, thunderings, earthquake and great hail tip us off that something troubling is on the horizon, and indeed that is exactly what we discover as we move into chapter 12.

1. **Satan tried to keep Him from coming. 12:1-2**

- John sees a “great sign in heaven.” This is the first of 7 signs in the remainder of the Revelation (cf. also 13:3; 13:13, 14; 15:1; 16:14; 19:20). It is the sign of a woman, the second of 4 symbolic women in Revelation. Who is the woman clothed with the sun with the moon under her feet and with a garland of 12 stars on her head? Answer: 1) some believe it is Mary, 2) others the church, 3) others the Messianic community. However, if one will note both the context as well as the Old Testament background for this, it is clear that it is the nation of Israel that is in view. First of all, notice it is the woman who gives birth to the Christ child. This would rule out the Church. Secondly, in Genesis 37: 9-11, we have the dream of Joseph recorded. Verse 9 says, “Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers and said, look I have dreamed another dream and this time the sun, the moon, and the 11 stars bowed down to me.” This vision tips us off that what we see in Revelation 12 is nothing less than the nation of Israel (Joseph would constitute the 12th star in John’s vision) who indeed gave birth to the Messiah.
- Crying out in labor and in pain to give birth is also reflective of Old Testament imagery that is often applied to the nation of Israel as a mother giving birth (Isaiah 26:17-18; 54:1; 66: 7-12; Hosea 13:13; Micah 4:10; 5:2-3; Matthew 24:8). Indeed the nation agonized and suffered throughout the centuries as she longed for her Messiah to come and as Satan worked diligently to prevent it.

2. **Satan tried to kill Him when He came. 12:3-4**

Having seen the sign of the woman, John now sees another sign in heaven. It is that of a great fiery red dragon. It is identified in verse 9 as the devil. The devil will appear as a dragon 13 times in the Revelation. His fiery red color speaks of his murderous intent and the bloodshed that he will cause to happen. That he is a dragon speaks of his terror and ferociousness.

The basic idea of a dragon attempting to destroy a special child was a common myth in the ancient world. In Greek mythology, Apollo, who was the child of the goddess Leto, was pursued by the dragon, Python, who sought to kill both the mother and the child. Apollo would later kill Python. In Egypt, Set was a red dragon who pursued Isis, the pregnant mother of Horus. When he was grown, Isis likewise killed Set. However, John is not borrowing from these ancient myths. He has an altogether different drama that is rooted in spiritual reality that he is attempting to convey. The 7 heads and 10 horns will appear again in chapters 13 & 17 and will address both Satan’s control of 7

worldly kingdoms of the past, as well as his future control of 10 future kingdoms. That he has 7 diadems on his head, unlike the 10 crowns on the head of the beast in 13:1 is an indication of his attempt to completely usurp the royal rights that belong only to Jesus Christ.

- His tail drawing a third of the stars of heaven and throwing them to the earth would seem to indicate 1/3 of the angels falling and becoming demons when Satan rebelled against God. We have already seen in 9:1 that a star indeed can represent a fallen angel.
- The dragon throughout history sought to destroy the child and when he was born he again made every effort to terminate him.
- He moved Cain to kill Abel (1 John 3:12). He moved Pharaoh to kill Hebrew boys (Exodus 1-2). He moved Saul to kill David (1 Samuel 18:10-11). He moved wicked Athaliah to destroy all the royal heirs of the house of Judah (2 Chronicles 22:10). He moved Haman to plot genocide against the Jews (Esther). He moved Herod to kill Jesus (Matthew 2).

3. Satan tried to keep Him from His crown. 12:5-6

Verse 5 summarizes the “first coming career” of the Lord Jesus Christ. It includes his birth, his destiny to rule all the nations (cf. Psalm 2:9), and his ascension. The reason the ascension is highlighted rather than the crucifixion and resurrection is two-fold: 1) the crucifixion and resurrection were beautifully expounded in chapter 5, and 2) the ascension is the unquestionable proof that Satan was defeated in that he could not prevent Christ from rising from the dead and ascending back to His Father where He now is seated at the right hand of the throne of God, perhaps the very place that Satan coveted when he fell (see Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28).

- Verse 6 speaks of the future destiny of the woman as she flees to the wilderness (an unspecified location of protection) which is especially made ready for her by God and a place that she will be nourished and protected for 3½ years (almost certainly the last half of the tribulation period). This is expounded further in 12:13-16.

*Perhaps only ¼ of Americans have a strong belief that Satan is real, as recent surveys note (Barna report, *RNS*, June 29, 2001). But the Bible is abundantly clear that there is indeed a malignant, maniacal, evil entity who has pursued throughout his life the Son of God with wrath, envy, and an agenda bent on his destruction. We should never ever forget, that Satan hates the Lord Jesus.

II. Satan hates the Child of God. 12:7-12

Illustration:

“Arsonist to Spend Life in Prison for Church Fires Across Eight States” (*Baptist Press*, 8-31-01, by Tammy Ledbetter) – “The man who apparently set

more churches on fire than any other individual during the last decade will spend the rest of his life in prison. And while many of the 829 churches targeted for arson between 1995 – 1999 were presumed to have been an expression of racial hatred, arsonist J. Scott Vallinger says he drew his inspiration from Lucifer.... When the FBI searched his Daleville, IN residence, they found evidence of satanic paraphernalia, including pentagrams, goat heads, and a book of spells. According to local news coverage, a Daleville police officer had reported in 1993 that Vallinger had solicited teenagers to sign blood contracts with the devil. Some of them described being intimidated by the 31 year-old who called himself a worshiper of Lucifer.... Court documents indicate that Vallinger traveled around the country practicing his religious beliefs as a Luciferian. His writings expressed hostility toward Christianity and referenced study of Satanism, the occult, witchcraft and non-Christian beliefs.”

This is one recent example that is simply a reminder to all of us that Satan not only hates the Lord Jesus, he also hates the child of God and the church of God. Such stories could cause us fear and anxiety, but it is at this point that this wonderful text steps in and reminds us that though he may hate us, he is indeed on the losing side in the battle.

1. Remember that Satan is a defeated foe. 12:7-9

- War broke out in heaven: the time is not specified. Some believe it looks back to the time of Satan’s fall. Others believe it looks to the time of the crucifixion. Still others believe it looks to the future and the midpoint of the tribulation. This last position is the better view in my judgement.
- Michael is named in Scripture as the archangel (Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9). Interestingly, the name Michael means “who is like God?” and stands in stark contrast to Satan’s egocentric attack on the Lord where he said in Isaiah 14:14, “I will be like the most high.”
- Satan and his angels (demons) are defeated and they are cast out of heaven and, as verse 13 notes, they are cast to the earth. Satan and his demons were cast out of heaven as their home at the time of their original rebellion. However, the Bible seems to indicate that they still have some degree of access to heaven (see Job 1:6; 2:1). However, in the future, during this great battle that takes place during the tribulation, they will be cast out permanently and denied any access to heaven at all. In other words, they will be banished and barred from the presence of God and heaven forever.
- 12:9 contains 4 instructive titles of our archenemy: 1) the great dragon – which emphasizes again his ferocity and terror, 2) that serpent of old – which identifies him with the beguiling snake of Genesis 3 who seduced Adam and Eve into committing sin, 3) the devil – literally *diabolos* which means “to accuse or slander,” and 4) Satan – a proper name which means “the adversary” or “the enemy.”

- Verse 9 concludes by summarizing both his deceptive activity and his defeat. Note, it is the whole world that he pursues with his lies. He indeed hates all who bear the image of God! Also note that the phrase, “cast down” occurs 3 times in the ninth verse to emphasize the certainty and finality of his defeat. That same phrase will occur 3 additional times in 12:10, 12, and 13. Satan has been cast from the throne of God (Ezekiel 28:16 &17), he will be cast from heaven (Revelation 12:9), he will then be cast into the bottomless pit (Revelation 20:3), and he will finally be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10). Truly, his fall is great. There is coming a day when he will get his due.

2. **Remember that salvation is a settled fact. 12:10**

- The loud voice in heaven is not specified, though it could be the 24 elders.
- Four things are said to come as a result of the devil being cast out of heaven: 1) Salvation, 2) Strength, 3) The Kingdom of our God (the Father), and 4) The Power (authority) of His Christ (the Son). Have come – the phrase “have come” is actually fronted toward the beginning of the verse for emphasis.
- Why has all of this occurred? Because the accuser who accuses day and night, emphasizing the consistency and continuation of the evil one’s attack on us, has been cast down. Salvation and the kingdom of our God have come. Salvation is a settled fact.

3. **Remember that saints have a victorious faith. 12:11**

- 12:11 provides the basis of our salvation through a beautiful and magnificent declaration. Those who follow the Lamb, the Christ of God, have also become victorious over the dragon. And how did they overcome? Two bases for our victory is noted: 1) the blood of the Lamb and 2) the word of our testimony (witness). The power of the blood is indeed sufficient for our sin. It is also sufficient for death. Indeed the loyalty of the child of God to the Lamb who shed His blood is witnessed by his faithfulness even unto death. This verse beautifully states that their love for the Lamb was greater than their love for their own life. Amazingly the blood of the martyrs shows not the triumph of Satan, but rather the triumph of the saints as their acceptance of Jesus and His work on the cross provides victory over sin as well as Satan. Because our sins have been washed in the blood of the Lamb of God, no accusation by the devil can stand against us. We have not been forgiven because of who we are, we have been forgiven because of who He is and what He has done for us. He washed our sins away in His precious blood.

Illustration

Tyler Roberts, a lecturer and head tutor at Harvard University, asked his class on one occasion, “Who was Jesus?” He noted that “most said he was a religious figure. Some said a philosopher, comparing him to Socrates. Then there was Jesus as political leader, with one student comparing him to Mao and Stalin.” I much prefer the testimony of the Revelation. It simply states, “He is our Savior.”

4. Remember that sinners have a tragic future. 12:12

As wonderful as our salvation is, the destiny of those who do not know Jesus is equally sorrowful and tragic.

- Those in heaven and those on the earth who know the Lamb are called to rejoice. In contrast, there is a woe pronounced on “the inhabitants of the earth” (the technical term for unbelieving humanity that stands in opposition to God throughout the Revelation). What is the basis for the woe? Answer: the fact that the devil has come down and he has great wrath. Why? Because he knows he has a short time. Indeed, he has no more than 3½ years before he will find his new home for 1000 years in the abyss. Satan has raged against humanity ever since we entered the Garden of Eden. He is not letting up one wit in our day. Now as his time draws to a close, his wrath will increase to proportions beyond our wildest imagination. Truly, hell will come to earth during these horrible final days of the tribulation. Sinners can only expect destruction, disaster and death at the hands of the great fiery red dragon.

III. Satan hates the nation of Israel. 12:13-17

Satan hates the Lord Jesus. Satan hates the child of God. But Satan also has a special hatred for a particular nation: the nation of Israel. Verse 6 taught us that the woman would flee to a wilderness place where she would be protected and nourished by God. Verses 13 – 17 expand upon that brief introduction and also further reveal the wrath of the dragon as it is vented against the woman, the nation of Israel. Satan will pursue her with fiery red passion. God, however, will watch over her, provide for her, protect her.

1. God has a place for Israel. 12:13-14

- Unbelievable Anti-Semitism commence at the midpoint of the tribulation. This is the thrust of verse 13.
- God however will make a place for her during the last 3½ years. The phrase “two wings of a great eagle” should not be taken literally. Neither should this be viewed as some type of 747! It is simply a picture of God’s providential protection of Israel. Wings often appear in the Bible as a sign of God’s protection (see Exodus 19:4; Deuteronomy 32: 9-12; Psalm 91:4; Isaiah 40:31). Indeed

Exodus 19:4 says, “You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself.” The word translated “feed” in verse 6 is the exact same word that is translated “nourished” here in verse 14. The length of her time in the wilderness is again specified as 3½ years (time and times and half a time). Furthermore, she is said to be in a place that is separated from the presence of the serpent. Some have identified this wilderness place as Petra. Others believe that it simply indicates a scattering of the Jewish people throughout the nations for protection. Though the latter seems too general, one cannot specify with any certainty exactly where this place will be. What we do know is that God will make a way for the Jewish people during this great wave of Anti-Semitism.

2. God has protection for Israel. 12:15-16

- The serpent spewing water out of his mouth like a flood is an indication of his desire to destroy the woman. Some believe this refers to an army, because often an army is pictured as a great flood of water (see Jeremiah 46:8; 47:2). Others believe the flood from his mouth refers to his arrogant and blasphemous words (see the activity of the beast in Revelation 13:5). However Satan comes at the woman, his efforts will utterly fail.
- Verse 16 indicates that the earth will help the woman, opening its mouth and swallowing up the flood which comes from the dragon. If this is reference to a literal physical miracle, we can think back to when the Lord had the earth open up to swallow Korah (Numbers 16:31-32). It is possible that even one of the great earthquakes that visits the earth during the great tribulation will be the avenue whereby God will provide a physical miracle to spare the Jewish people. Interestingly, the dragon-inspired Egyptians of old were swallowed up by the earth. Exodus 15:12 reminds us, “You stretched out your hand and the earth swallowed them.”

3. God has a purpose for Israel. 12:17

Having failed to destroy the woman, the wrath of the dragon is enraged to even greater heights. Not being able to defeat her, he chooses now to go off to make war with the “rest of her offspring.” This I believe is a reference to all the other followers of the Lamb that he can find throughout the earth, Jew and Gentile alike. The rest of her offspring are clearly believers, for they are referred to as those who keep the commandments of God and have (continually) the testimony or witness of Jesus. The phrase “to make war” is the same expression used of the beast’s attack on the two witnesses in 11:7 and also his attack against the saints in 13:7.

- Although the devil will be unable to totally exterminate Israel, Zechariah 13:8 sorrowfully informs us that 2/3 of the Jewish

population will be killed during the tribulation. Satan will not utterly succeed in wiping the Jew from the face of the earth, but he will succeed in plunging many to their death. Satan indeed hates the nation of Israel.

Conclusion

Satan forfeited his place as the highest created being and became the supreme enemy of God. By leading a mutiny against God among the angels, Satan attempted unsuccessfully to destroy the paradise of heaven. By leading a mutiny against God among men, Satan destroyed the earthly paradise of the Garden of Eden, plunged the whole human race into decay and corruption, and usurped (temporarily) the role of the “ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 16:11).

The opening campaign of Satan’s war of the ages took place in heaven. When he rebelled (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:12-17), one-third of the angels foolishly and wickedly cast their lots with him. Wanting to be like God, they became as much unlike Him as possible. These fallen angels (or demons) became Satan’s storm troopers, doing the bidding of their evil commander. They fight against divine purpose, making war with both the holy angels and the human race.

We joined in when Adam and Eve listened to Satan’s lies and disobeyed God. Thus, the human race became embroiled in the cosmic war of the ages. In fact, since the Fall the earth has been the primary theater in which that war has been fought.

Satan, aided by the absence of the raptured church and the presence of increased demon hordes (9:1-11), will mount his most desperate assaults against God’s purposes and His people. However, despite the savage fury with which his assaults are carried out, they will not succeed. The Lord Jesus Christ will effortlessly crush Satan and his forces (19:11-21) and send him to the abyss for the duration of the millennial kingdom (20:102). After leading a final rebellion at the close of the millennium, Satan will be consigned to eternal punishment in the lake of fire (20:3, 7-10).

Should we hate the devil? I think we should. Be sure of this one thing though, he certainly hates you. If he can keep you from coming to Jesus, he will. If, however, he fails at keeping you from getting saved, rest assured he will do his best to keep you from being a faithful and effective witness for the Lord. He will bring accusations against your conscience, he will accuse you before the Lord, and if possible he will see to your martyrdom. However, always keep the words of verse 11 ringing in your ears, “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” Satan may kill our body, but he cannot touch our soul. Jesus has seen to that!