

LESSONS ON PREDESTINATION #40

"War in Heaven"

(Scriptures from NKJV)

And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And 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. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."(Revelation 12:7-12)

INTRODUCTION: In the previous message, we looked at the two great signs in heaven as expressed by the symbolic language found in verses 1-6 of Revelation 12. The twelfth chapter of Revelation gives us a behind the scenes picture of the spiritual powers which oppose the people of God. It enables us to understand that our Christian warfare is not limited to flesh and blood (that which we can see), but is ***"against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."*** (Ephesians 6:12). Satan's purpose is for his kingdom of pride and dominion to take control over Christ's kingdom of humility and servanthood. We identified three symbols which described three important personages.

(1) The radiant sun-clothed woman: representing the chosen corporate people of Adam's race given by the Father to the Son in the decree of electing grace. They are beautiful and glorious in the sight of heaven. They have been manifested or identified throughout history by various names at differing times. They are:

First - Eve (Genesis 3:15)

Next - The Lord's people (Genesis 4:26)

Next - Israel (Genesis 35:10)

Next - Mary, the mother of Jesus (Matthew 1:18)

Next - The church (Matthew 16:18)

Lastly - The Bride, the Lamb's wife which will include all the redeemed of all the ages from Adam's race (Revelation 21:1-3; 9:11; 27)

(2) The great red dragon - represents Satan as the murderous deceiver and head of a world-wide kingdom of fallen angels and men.

(3) The Male-child - represents the Seed of the woman as it is manifested in Christ Jesus, God anointed Messiah, who upon His successful birth and ascension to the throne of God now rules over the world of men and angels as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

After failing to destroy the Child before He could get to the throne, Satan now seeks to destroy the woman. She then flees into the wilderness where she is protected and fed by God Himself. Today, we now focus on what the Bible describes as "War in Heaven." These verses (7-12) will show us what was the effect of Christ's atoning death, resurrection, and ascension to the throne.

A. THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE WARFARE.

1. Michael and his angels.

NOTE: We have no indication of any symbolism here. Michael is literal reality as are his angels. The war is real, only it is not fought with material weapons. The participants are pure immortal spirits and cannot die as such. The warfare will be fought on every conceivable level - moral, ideological, philosophical, theological and supernatural.

a. Michael, His name: it means "who is like God."

b. Michael, His person:

(1) He is the archangel - Jude 9 - ***"Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'"***

(2) He is one of the highest in rank of the holy angels, while Satan is the highest in rank of the fallen angels.

(3) He does battle for God against the devil, who is God's enemy - Revelation 12:7.

(4) He fights on behalf of God's chosen people - cf. Daniel 10:13, 21 - ***"But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia. . . . But I will tell you what is noted in the Scripture of Truth. (No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince.)"***

Also Daniel 12:1,2 - ***"At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that***

time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt."

(5) He accompanies Christ at His return - I Thessalonians 4:16 - ***"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first."***

(6) There are a small number of interpreters who identify Michael as being Christ, but this is unnecessary and adds confusion rather than clarity to the text. The text has already identified the Male-child as being Christ, and to maintain that Michael is also Christ only serves to complicate the imagery involved. While Jesus is great and powerful, there are great and powerful angels mentioned in Scripture which Jesus has at His disposal to implement and carry out His warfare with the devil and his angels. A reading of Daniel 10:13 and Daniel 12:1,2 with Jude verse 9, clearly distinguishes him from Christ. In the Jude passage, Michael and the devil are in a dispute over the body of Moses. Michael does not rebuke the devil in a direct manner because he is outranked by the devil and must call on the Lord to do the rebuking. Jesus would never have to ask for help from the Lord to rebuke the devil for He is the Lord! Thus Michael is the archangel, not Christ.

c. Michael, His army:

They comprise the holy angels who never fell.

2. Satan and his angels.

a. His name - Devil, Satan, cf. Verse 9.

(1) Devil means "slanderer."

(2) Satan means "adversary or accuser."

b. His ministry - to deceive the whole world, cf. Verse 9.

c. His army - "his angels" who followed him in his rebellion at the time occurring in Genesis 3:15, cf. Verses 7, 9.

B. THE TIME OF THE WARFARE.

1. Various theories of interpretation which will not fit the facts of the text.

a. At the beginning of time before Satan entered the paradise of Eden to deceive man. **Problem:** verse 10 - ***"Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, 'Now***

salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.'"

(1) The salvation of men has been accomplished. This did not occur at the beginning of time.

(2) The devil is called the "***accuser of our brethren,***" referring to the redeemed. There were no saved people at the beginning of time!

b. At the end of time in Revelation 20:7-10 - "***Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.***" **Problem:** There are no people left for Satan to persecute after the end of time. But in the text in Revelation 12:12-17, he is still persecuting the woman and her seed after he is cast out of heaven. (Cf. Verse 12).

c. At the ascension of Christ in verse 5. This view holds that Satan went to war against Christ on His throne. **Problem:** Satan is not fighting against Christ, but against the "brethren" who are in heaven. **NOTE;** the holy angels are not defending Christ, but the brethren from Satan's accusations.

d. At the middle of a seven year tribulation period, in which the "brethren" are understood to represent a remnant of Jewish people on earth. This is then followed by the last three and a half years of the tribulation in which Satan attacks the Jewish people on earth as described in verses 13-17. **Problem:** The "brethren" are in heaven, not on earth. They have died and gone to be with the Lord where they have been accused day and night by Satan for being sinners and having no right to be there. Also, if the events in Revelation 12 take place yet in the future, then the ascension of Christ to the throne had nothing to do with the casting out of Satan and his angels. This is the position taken by all who hold to the Dispensational Pre-tribulation, Premillennial position. This position struggles to explain what the catalyst is that brings on the war in heaven if it is not the ascension of Christ to His throne in verse 5.

John MacArthur attempts to answer the question in this manner. He states these words in a footnote in his reference Bible.

The tumultuous events on earth during the tribulation find their counterpart in heaven. A state of war has existed since the fall of Satan (cf. Verse 4; Daniel 10:13; Jude 9). Something will intensify that warfare, possibly the raptured saints passing through the realm of the prince of the power of the air (cf. Ephesians 2:2)."

MacArthur further states in his *Commentary on Revelation* that:

Possibly, as the raptured believers pass through their realm, the prince of the power of the air and his demon hosts will try to hinder their passage. That may trigger the battle with Michael and the holy angels."

I will leave for my readers (hearers) to ponder how all of that can occur **"in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet."** (I Corinthians 15:51).

2. A more viable or realistic interpretation will now be given.

C. THE OBJECTS OF SATAN'S WARFARE.

1. Negatively - It is not the holy angels.

- a. Some believe that Satan was trying to drag down Michael and his angels from their holy state, as he had already been successful in getting one-third of the angels to renounce God and join his own kingdom.

- b. This view does not fit the facts – Michael is not defending himself, but the "brethren" of Christ! (Cf. Verse 10).

2. Positively - The object of Satan's slanderous accusations are the people of God who had lived and died in the Old Testament before Christ came, and before He died and rose again to ascend to His throne. These brethren are in heaven. (Cf. Verse 12).

- a. Let us remember that all the saints who died in the Old Testament era went to heaven without their sin debt paid, for no atonement has yet been made. This is why Satan can slander and accuse them as being unforgiven sinners. He could also slander God's holy character for receiving them into His holy presence in heaven. Thus the warfare has been going on prior to Christ's ascension. Some believe this warfare started with the death of Abel.

- b. Herman Hoeksema, in his commentary on Revelation entitled, *Behold He*

Commeth, gives this vivid description.

This, therefore, is our interpretation. We think that all through the Old Testament days there was a battle fought in heaven for the souls of those who entered into glory before the suffering and exaltation of Christ, – a battle which was the logical concomitant of the battle the devil was fighting against the church to prevent the coming of the Great Seed. Just as certain as the devil was in his fight to prevent the coming of the Messiah, just as determined he had to be to fight this spiritual battle in heaven for the souls of the saved ones of the old dispensation. And therefore, once more, our explanation is that the devil fights a battle in heaven all through the days of the Old Testament for the possession of the souls who already had entered into glory from the days of Abel on, and that in this attack he is opposed by Michael and his angels, who stand for the children of God's people.

. . .

Now we also understand the text. Now we understand why he is called the old serpent, the devil, that is, the slanderer and accuser, why he is called Satan, the old deceiver. He slanders the saints of the Old Testament before God. He lies about them. He says that they have no right to enter into glory because they are condemned sinners. He accuses them by lying and slandering, and at the same time he slanders the name and the righteousness of God Who takes sinners into everlasting glory.

Thus, we can also understand the nature of the battle to a certain extent. The devil comes to fight for the souls of Abel and Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and of Moses and Samuel and of all the prophets, and of all those who had the promise and who lived and died by faith, endured the shame and mockery and persecution of the world in the old dispensation, and loved not their lives unto the death. And God sends Michael against him, to guard these souls and to defend the righteousness of God and the right of the saints to glory. The devil claims that they are sinners; Michael retorts that they are righteous. The devil maintains that they have sinned in paradise in Adam, and that they have sinned all their lives, and that therefore according to the righteousness of God they must be lost, they must go to hell. Michael replies that God Almighty has declared them righteous and that His Word alone is sovereign. The devil maintains that they are not righteous since they themselves have never paid for their sins and no mediator has yet appeared. Michael answers that God has revealed that He would send the Great Seed to perform this work of salvation and that to Him all these saints have been given. The devil finally assures Michael that he is fighting a great war on earth and that he will surely prevent the coming of this man child, or, if he comes, will certainly devour him. Michael's answer is that God is mighty to fulfill all His Word and to crush the head of the serpent. And thus this spiritual battle continues all through the old dispensation. The battle here pictured is a battle for the possession of the saints of Christ who have died and entered into glory during the time of the old dispensation, who have not loved their lives unto death, who have clung to the word of their testimony, and who were accused day and night before the countenance of Almighty God by the devil, that old serpent, who deceives the whole world and who slanders the people of God from age to age, day and night. (pp. 431-434).

D. THE OUTCOME OF THE WARFARE.

1. The battle is decided in favor of Michael and his angels. When Christ ascended to His throne, after His resurrection from the dead, it was God's declaration that the atoning work of Christ had been accepted as the payment for the sinners' debt. In Romans 1:3,4 we read, ***"concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."***

a. Michael can now point to the finished work of Christ to show that God has remained just and righteous in pardoning the sins of men through the substitutionary sacrifice of His Son in the sinners' place. In Colossians 2:13-15 we read, ***"And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it."***

b. The song of victory - verses 10, 11 (**Now is come**) ***"Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, 'Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And 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.'"***

c. Herman Hoeksema words it in this manner:

Then we can also understand why in the song of victory, sung immediately after this battle is finished, no mention is made of the angels, but only of the brethren who were accused but who had gained the victory through the blood of the Lamb and their faith in Him. Then we can understand why this great voice sings, "Now is come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ." It is the death-blow to Satan. It seems to me that Michael and all his angels shout this at the same time in the ears of Satan at the moment when Christ has been revealed, the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ. All was still hidden in the Old Testament day. It had not yet been historically revealed. And therefore there was room for argument on the part of the devil, and he could wage this war. But now has come the realization of the whole thing. Satan, you must go; you have no argument left. These saints of the Old Testament day belong to Christ, and they have a right to His inheritance. For their sins have been atoned by Him. Your defeat is accomplished. The accuser of the brethren in that sense of the

word is cast down. (Hoeksema, *Behold He Cometh*, p. 434).

The accuser of the brethren has been cast down. He no longer can lay any charge against God's elect. **"It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God. Who also makes intercession for us."** (Romans 8:33-34). "The Hallelujah Chorus" breaks out in heaven.

2. Satan is now cast out of the heavens where the departed saints dwell and will now direct all his remaining energies to persecute and deceive the saints down here on earth. (Verse 12).

3. Rejoice, my people, God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit, and Michael with his millions of angels, are on our side. We shall be protected and Satan shall be put under our feet shortly. Paul closes the book of Romans with these words, **"And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."** (Romans 16:20).