

War On Earth
Revelation 12:13-17
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INTRODUCTION

1. Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Revelation chapter 12.
2. The section that we're looking at begins in verse 13 and runs to the end of the chapter.
3. We have already seen *A Prelude to War* (vv.1-6), *War in Heaven* (vv.7-12), and now we're looking at *War On Earth* (vv.13-17).
4. In this passage we now are given "the reason...for Israel's flight, which was first mentioned in 12:6" (John MacArthur, Revelation 12-22, p.29).
5. Read Revelation 12:13-17.
6. One of the darkest stains on the history of mankind has been the hatred and persecution of the Jews.
7. Over the centuries the Jews have faced more hatred and persecution than any other people.
8. Much of that suffering was due to the chastisement of God in order to turn the nation away from their sin and unbelief and back to Him.
9. God repeatedly warned Israel of the consequences of disobedience.

10. In Deuteronomy 28:15-68, God gives the children of Israel the consequences and punishment that will come upon them if they fail to obey Him.
11. Read Deuteronomy 28:15-68.
12. Within God's sovereign purposes for His people, Israel has also suffered constantly and severely at the hands of Satan, acting as God's instrument.
13. Unlike God, however, Satan's purpose in causing the Jewish people to suffer is not remedial, but destructive.
14. He seeks to bring them not to repentance and salvation, but to death and destruction.
15. In John MacArthur's second volume to his commentary series on Revelation, he concisely rehearses the history of Israel's sufferings. He writes:

“Israel faced constant threats from her neighbors during the periods of the judges and of the kings. Later, first the northern kingdom of Israel (722 B.C.) and then the southern kingdom of Judah (586 B.C.) were conquered by their enemies. As a result, the Jewish people lost their independence and became subject to foreign powers, including Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

In postbiblical times the story has, tragically, been much the same. The history of the Jewish people for the last two thousand years is a sad litany of prejudice, persecution, and pogroms. The first widespread persecution of the Jewish people in Europe took place during the First Crusade (1095-99). As they made their way across Europe toward

Palestine, mobs of unruly crusaders destroyed Jewish homes and villages and massacred their inhabitants. When they captured Jerusalem in 1099, the crusaders herded Jerusalem's Jewish population into a synagogue and set it on fire. Most of the Jews perished, and the survivors were sold into slavery. King Edward I banished all Jews from England in 1290, thus giving England the dubious honor of being the first country to expel its Jewish population. They would not be permitted to return until the time of Oliver Cromwell, nearly three and a half centuries later. France followed suit in 1306, Spain in 1492-ironically, the year of Columbus's voyage of discovery to the New World. Throughout the Middle Ages, the Jews were blamed for various natural disasters-most notably the Black Death (1348-50)-and savagely persecuted.

The nineteenth century saw an outbreak of anti-Semitism in Russia, where Jews were blamed for the assassination of Tsar Alexander II (1881). In the ensuing pogroms of the next four decades, tens of thousands of Jews were killed, and hundreds of thousands of others driven from their homes. Nearly 3 million more were killed during Stalin's reign, part of the tens of millions of people massacred by that notorious dictator. 1894 saw the scandalous Dreyfus affair in France, in which a Jewish army officer, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, was falsely convicted of treason. Only after twelve years of public turmoil over the case was Dreyfus exonerated.

But the darkest hour in the long history of anti-Semitism was yet to come. In the early 1930s the Nazi party came to power in Germany and their insane racial theories became public policy. Unlike others who had persecuted the Jewish people, the Nazis and their maniacal leader, Adolf Hitler, did not merely seek to persecute the Jews, but to eliminate them. In the Holocaust that ensued when the Nazis sought to implement their "final solution" to the "Jewish problem," 6

million Jews-more than half the Jewish population of Europe-were slaughtered.

But despite millennia of savage persecution, the Jewish people still survive. John Phillips wrote:

Significantly, the turning point came in Moses' life when he saw, in the desert, that mysterious burning bush, which flamed and blazed away but, for all the crackling of the fire, was not consumed. That bush clearly symbolized Israel, which cannot be consumed despite the ceaseless hatred of her foes, because God is in her midst. Israel cannot be assimilated into the nations, nor can she be exterminated by the nations. She is a burning bush in the wilderness. (Exploring Revelation, rev. ed. [Chicago: Moody, 1987; reprint, Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux, 1991], 156). (John MacArthur, Revelation 12-22, pp.26-27).

16. God's Word speaks of more trouble ahead for God's people.
17. This suffering will be worse than anything the nation has endured in the past.
18. Jeremiah called that time "the time of Jacob's trouble" or "distress" (Jer.30:7).
19. Jesus described it as "a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will" (Mat.24:21).
20. The Great Tribulation will be the worst of times for Israel for two reasons.
21. During this period God will pour out His final fury on the unrepentant and unbelieving world (including the unrepentant rebels of Israel).

22. At the same time, Satan will make his last, desperate attempt to prevent the promised reign of the Lord Jesus Christ on Israel's throne and thus negate the salvation and kingdom promised to Israel.
23. Daniel 12:1-11 describes this tragic and triumphant time for Israel.
24. Read Daniel 12:1-11.
25. Daniel, like Jeremiah and Jesus, saw essentially the same scenario that John reveals in Revelation 12 – a future time of unparalleled distress, persecution, and slaughter for Israel.
26. Two-thirds of the Jews alive at that time will be killed as God uses Satan to purge the rebels from the nation (Zech.13:8-9; cf. Ezek.20:38).
27. But the elect, believing remnant will enter the Messiah's kingdom, along with those resurrected Old Testament saints who at that time will "awake...to everlasting life" (Dan.12:2).
28. This passage describes three attacks that Satan's forces will mount against Israel during the Great Tribulation.
29. The first is seen as *Satan Persecutes Israel* (vv.13-16).

I. Satan Persecutes Israel (vv.13-16)

A. The First Attack (vv.13-14)

1. This comes as a direct result of Satan being expelled from heaven (v.13)

“He persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child.”

“Persecuted” Gr.dioko, means, “to pursue,” “to chase,” or “to hunt.”

It is used in the NT of pursuit with hostile intent.

- a) Jesus warned the disciples of this kind of persecution in Matthew 23:34

“Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city.”

- b) He also spoke of this in His Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24:15-22

The only appropriate response to the imminent danger will be immediate flight; there will be no time even to return home to gather belongings.

Pregnant women and those nursing infants will be especially vulnerable, since it will be difficult for them to flee quickly.

2. Israel will be protected from this attack from Satan (v.14)
 - a) She will be “given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.”
 - (1) This figurative language symbolically depicts Israel’s escape from Satan’s assault
 - (2) This imagery is taken from Exodus 19:4

“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself.”
 - (3) Wings in Scripture symbolizes several things:
 - (a) Strength - Isa.40:31 - “But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.”
 - (b) Speed - Ps.18:10 - “And He rode upon a cherub, and flew; He flew upon the wings of the wind.”

(c) Protection

- (1) Deut.32:9-11 - “For the Lord’s portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance. “He found him in a desert land And in the wasteland, a howling wilderness; He encircled him, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirs up its nest, Hovers over its young, Spreading out its wings, taking them up, Carrying them on its wings.”
- (2) Ps.17:8 - “Keep me as the apple of Your eye; Hide me under the shadow of Your wings.”
- (3) Ps.36:7 - “How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings.”

b) “Eagle” Gr.aetos can also refer to the griffon or the vulture. These large birds with enormous wing spans serve as a fitting symbol for God’s protection and shelter

- c) The location of the place where the Jews will flee is not revealed
 - (1) Some have suggested the fortresslike city of Petra, carved into the rocky cliffs of Edom between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba. Since Petra was only approachable through a narrow gorge, it was easy to defend in ancient times.
 - (2) The term “wilderness” does not reveal the exact location since this term is general term used to describe the desolate area east of Jerusalem (cf. Mat.3:1; Mk.1:4; Jn.11:54)
 - (3) In her place of safety and refuge, Israel will be supernaturally “nourished” by God just like he did by providing her ancestors with quail and manna in the wilderness (Ex.16:12ff)
- d) The duration of Israel’s hiding and God’s provision is defined as “a time and times and half a time”
 - (1) This phrase, drawn from Daniel 7:25 and 12:7, refers to the second half of Daniel’s 70th week known as the Great Tribulation (Mat.24:21)
 - (2) It is the same period defined in Rev.12:6 as “one thousand two hundred and sixty days” (cf.11:3) and in 13:5 as “forty-two months” (cf.11:2)

- (3) This period, initiated by the setting up of the abomination of desolation (Dan.11:31; 12:11; Mat.24:15; 2 Thess.2:3-4), will mark the visibly, overtly career of Antichrist
- (4) During that time God will protect Israel “from the presence of the serpent.”

Although Satan may know where the Jews are hiding, he will be unable to get at them because of divine protection.

Frustrated by this defeat of his first assault on the Jewish people, the devil launches a second attack in verses 15-16.

B. The Second Attack (vv.15-16)

1. Satan now resorts to long-range tactics
2. Just as the serpent is not an actual snake but a symbolic representation of Satan (like the dragon), the water he spews like a flood out of his mouth is also symbolic (v.15)
 - a) This imagery is also derived from the OT, where floods symbolize trouble in general
 - (1) Job 27:20 - “Terrors overtake him like a flood; A tempest steals him away in the night.”
 - (2) Ps.32:6 - “For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You In a time when You may be found; Surely in a flood of great waters They shall not

come near him.”

- (3) Ps.69:1-2 - “Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire, Where there is no standing; I have come into deep waters, Where the floods overflow me.”
 - b) This imagery is also used to describe an invading, destroying army
 - (1) Jer.46:8 - “Egypt rises up like a flood, And its waters move like the rivers; And he says, ‘I will go up and cover the earth, I will destroy the city and its inhabitants.”
 - (2) Jer.47:2 - “Thus says the Lord: “Behold, waters rise out of the north, And shall be an overflowing flood; They shall overflow the land and all that is in it, The city and those who dwell within; Then the men shall cry, And all the inhabitants of the land shall wail.”
 - c) Satan will seek to cause Israel “to be carried away by the flood”
3. The earth helped Israel by opening “its mouth and [swallowing] up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth” (v.16).
 - a) This imagery is reminiscent of Moses description of God’s destruction of

Pharaoh's army in Exodus 15:12:

“You stretched out Your right hand; The earth swallowed them.”

- b) This also parallels the story of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, whose rebellion against Moses was crushed by God in Numbers 16:28-33:

“And Moses said: “By this you shall know that the Lord has sent me to do all these works, for I have not done them of my own will. If these men die naturally like all men, or if they are visited by the common fate of all men, then the Lord has not sent me. But if the Lord creates a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, then you will understand that these men have rejected the Lord.”

Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods. So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly.”

The picture of the ground splitting open and swallowing up the armies that pursue Israel may be caused by one of the frequent earthquakes during the Great Tribulation.

Satan now having his second attack frustrated turns to “the rest of her offspring” in verse 17.

II. Satan Persecutes Believers (v.17)

- A. Some Have Identified The Rest of Her Children as the 144,000
- B. Some Believe The Rest of Her Offspring Refers to the Church
- C. It is Best to Take This to Mean All Those Who Name the Name of Christ

- 1. They are further described as those “who keep the commandments of God”

“Commandments” Gr.entolas is a word used frequently in John’s writings to refer to NT commands

- a) Rev.14:12
- b) John 14:15, 21
- c) John 15:10,12
- d) 1 John 2:3-4

- 2. They also are those who “have the testimony of Jesus Christ”

This is not a testimony about Him, but the testimony He gave, the truths He taught that are revealed in the New Testament.

These persecuted believers will give further evidence that their salvation is real by their obedience to the truth of Scripture.

CONCLUSION

1. All of Satan's attacks are thwarted by God's protection of Israel and His people.
2. Just as Satan's attacks failed against Israel, they will also fail against believers.
3. The Lord Jesus Christ will triumph; He will reign on earth, and the surviving Tribulation saints, both Jews and Gentiles, will enter His earthly kingdom.
4. For the long-suffering people of Israel, the darkest hour lies ahead.
5. But it will be followed by a glorious dawn.
6. The elect remnant of Israel, having survived the most savage persecution in the nation's long history, will be saved and enjoy the bliss of the millennial kingdom, "and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written" (Rom.11:26).