

THE LONG WAR BETWEEN SATAN & ISRAEL

Revelation 12:1-17

1/3 of the world population of Jews were murdered in the WWII Holocaust. 2/3s of the world population of Jews will be murdered in the Tribulation Holocaust (Zech. 13:8).

Who will be driving this anti-Semitism and why?

Poised to begin the second half of the Tribulation, Revelation 12 reveals the who and why of the Tribulation Holocaust.

Several of the symbols are interpreted in the chapter itself so we will read the entire chapter.

The Woman and the Dragon

¹ And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. ² She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. ³ And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. ⁴ His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. ⁵ She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, ⁶ and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

Satan Thrown Down to Earth

⁷ Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, ⁸ but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. ¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. ¹¹ And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. ¹² Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!”

¹³ And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. ¹⁴ But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. ¹⁵ The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. ¹⁶ But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. ¹⁷ Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.

This chapter breaks into three parts. Verses 1-6 reveal the reason for Satan's historic hatred of the Jews; they are the source of Christ. Verses 7-12 describe Satan's expulsion from the atmospheric heavens to the earth by the forces of Michael the Archangel. This takes place at the midpoint of the Tribulation. Verses 13-17 describe Satan's persecution of the Jews during the final 3 ½ years of the Tribulation.

Verses 1-6 make clear the reason for Satan's hatred of Israel. Satan hates Israel because she is the source of the Messiah.

SATAN HATES ISRAEL BECAUSE SHE IS THE SOURCE OF THE MESSIAH (12:1-6)

The Woman is the Nation of Israel (12:1-2)

Revelation 12:1–2 (ESV)

¹ *And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. ² She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth.*

The woman represents the nation of Israel. She is described in the same manner as Jacob, Rachel and the twelve sons of Jacob (the family from which the nation of Israel developed) were described in Joseph's dream (Gen. 37:9-10). The male child to whom she gives birth is Jesus the Messiah. Both the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants plus many prophecies specified that Messiah would be an Israelite.

The woman represents the nation of Israel from whom Jesus was born.

Who is the dragon?

The Dragon is Satan (12:3-4)

Revelation 12:3–4 (ESV)

³ *And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. ⁴ His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it.*

Verse 9 clearly reveals the dragon is Satan.

Revelation 12:9 (ESV)

⁹ *And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*

The dragon is Satan and the stars are the angels he deceived. Verse 4 reveals Satan successfully deceived 1/3 of the angelic population to worship him rather than the Creator.

Revelation 12:4 (ESV)

⁴ *His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it.*

The dragon is graphically portrait as positioning itself to devour the woman's child as soon as it was delivered from her womb.

Who is the child?

The Child is Jesus Christ (12:5)

Revelation 12:5 (ESV)

⁵ *She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne,*

The male child is Jesus the Messiah.

The vision brackets Jesus' first coming from His birth to His ascension and exaltation. This emphasizes the failure of the dragon to devour the child at birth. This verse also emphasizes Jesus' victory over the dragon in that Jesus is the One who will ultimately *rule all the nations*.

Verse 6 fast forwards from Jesus' ascension to Israel's persecution during the Tribulation

Israel Persecuted During Tribulation (12:6)

⁶ *and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.*

Verses 1-6 reveal that Satan hates Israel because Israel is the source of Jesus. Satan failed to destroy Jesus at His first coming. Satan will viciously persecute Israel during the Tribulation, particularly during the final 3 ½ years.

SATAN'S DEFEAT WILL INFLAME HIS PERSECUTION OF ISRAEL (12:7-12)

The battle described in verses 7-12 will take place midway through the Tribulation. It will be fought in the atmospheric heavens surrounding the earth; this is the present abode of Satan and the fallen angels. This is why the Apostle Paul refers to Satan as the *prince of the power of the air* (Eph. 2:2). Satan and the fallen angels will be defeated by Michael the archangel (Dan. 12:1) and thrown down to the earth.

Satan Will Be Thrown to the Earth (12:7-9)

Revelation 12:7-9 (ESV)

⁷ Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, ⁸ but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

The heaven in view in verse 8 is the atmosphere around the earth which is the present abode of Satan. Defeated by Michael, Satan and his angels will be cast down to the earth. They will no longer be able to operate in the atmosphere around the earth; they will be limited to operations on the ground.

This will be a great thing for heaven as verses 10-11 declare but a terrible thing for people on the earth as verse 12 states.

Satan Will Be Barred From the Presence of God (12:10-12)

Revelation 12:10-12 (ESV)

¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. ¹¹ And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. ¹² Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"

Michael's defeat of Satan elicits rejoicing in heaven because Satan's incessant accusation of God's people has come to an end. Though his abode has been the atmosphere surrounding the earth since his rebellion (Ezek. 28:16) Satan retains access to the 3rd heaven, the abode of God. He uses his access to point out to God the sin of His people. In accusing God's people, Satan is accusing God of unrighteousness for not judging them.

But the accused conquer Satan by their faith in the blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb. His blood paid the penalty for all their sins. The justice of God has been satisfied; sin has been punished. The accused also conquer Satan by the *word of their testimony*. The *word of their testimony* refers to believers who know God's Word, apply it to their lives and teach it to others. The Word of God exposes Satan for who he is and how he works. Those who love Scripture aren't fooled by Satan.

The ultimate conquerors of Satan are those believers, (and there will be many during the Tribulation), who love Jesus more than this life. Satan can't intimidate or manipulate people who are not afraid to die; they are his ultimate conquerors.

With Michael's victory over Satan heaven rejoices that Satan is thrown to earth never again to accuse the brethren.

But what's good news for heaven is bad news for earth.

Defeated, limited to earth and barred from God's presence, Satan will be full of wrath because he knows his time is short.

How much time does he have left?

3 ½ years.

And he is going to pour out his wrath on Israel.

Satan Will Vent His Wrath on Israel (12:13-17)

¹³ *And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child.* ¹⁴ *But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time.* ¹⁵ *The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood.* ¹⁶ *But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth.* ¹⁷ *Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.*

Satan will vent his rage on Israel during the second half of the Tribulation. He will persecute the Jews, but a Remnant will escape to a place in the wilderness prepared by God for their protection. The *two wings of the great eagle* refer to Exodus 19:4 when God delivered Israel *on the wings of an eagle* from the army of Egypt. God will deliver the Remnant and sustain them for 3 ½ years. There is Scriptural evidence that may point to the ancient city of Petra as the place of refuge.

Satan will attempt to destroy the Remnant through a military operation, but the physical terrain and conditions of the refuge will cause the operation to fail. When water and flood are used symbolically, they represent a military campaign (Dan. 9:26). The fact that the earth helps the woman indicates that the physical characteristics of the refuge and/or the area surrounding the refuge will thwart the military operation.

Unable to destroy the Remnant, Satan will unleash his hatred on Messianic Jews scattered around the world. These will be the *offspring* of the woman *who keep the commandments of God* and who *hold to the testimony of Jesus*.

The final sentence sets us up for chapter 13: *And he stood on the sand of the sea...*

Revelation 12 explains why Satan hates Israel, why his persecution of Israel will dramatically intensify going into the second half of the Tribulation and how a Remnant of the Jews will escape Satan's campaign.

REFLECTION

Satan is the author and purveyor of antisemitism – the hatred of the Jewish people.

Unfortunately there is a long history of antisemitism in the Christian church. The origin of Christian anti-Semitism can be traced to the development of a concept known as "collective guilt". This concept taught that the Jewish people were to blame for the crucifixion of Jesus and therefore the Jewish people are guilty of *deicide* (killing of a god).

Following are quotes from prominent Church fathers of the early church.

John Chrysostom (344-407 A.D.) One of the "greatest" of church fathers was known as "The Golden Mouthed." Chrysostom was a missionary preacher famous for his sermons and addresses.

The synagogue is worse than a brothel...it is the den of scoundrels and the repair of wild beasts...the temple of demons devoted to idolatrous cults...the refuge of brigands and dabauchees, and the cavern of devils. It is a criminal assembly of Jews...a place of meeting for the assassins of Christ... a house worse than a drinking shop...a den of thieves, a house of ill fame, a dwelling of iniquity, the refuge of devils, a gulf and a abyss of perdition."..."I would say the same things about their souls... As for me, I hate the synagogue...I hate the Jews for the same reason.¹

¹ From "The Roots of Christian Anti-Semitism" by Malcolm Hay

St. Augustine (354-430 A.D.), *Confessions*, 12.14 Augustine was an extremely influential theologian in the formation of Christian doctrine particularly for the Catholic church.

How hateful to me are the enemies of your Scripture! How I wish that you would slay them (the Jews) with your two-edged sword, so that there should be none to oppose your word! Gladly would I have them die to themselves and live to you!

Peter the Venerable (1092-1156 A.D.)— known as "the meekest of men, a model of Christian charity"

Yes, you Jews. I say, do I address you; you, who till this very day, deny the Son of God. How long, poor wretches, will ye not believe the truth? Truly I doubt whether a Jew can be really human... I lead out from its den a monstrous animal, and show it as a laughing stock in the amphitheater of the world, in the sight of all the people. I bring thee forward, thou Jew, thou brute beast, in the sight of all men.²

Antisemitism became theologically institutionalized in the form of *Replacement Theology* which teaches that the Church has replaced Israel in God's program.

The Jews are God's chosen people.

God will fulfill His covenant promises to give Israel the Land, the Seed and the Blessing.

One of the three purposes of the Tribulation is to break the stubborn will of the Jewish people so that they accept Jesus as their Messiah and enter into the New Covenant (Dan. 12:7; Ezek. 34:25-31, 36:2-38).

Antisemitism has no place in the hearts and minds of Christians or Christian churches. We should seek to bless the Jewish people from whom our Savior came and to pray for their salvation. We should live in light of God's promise to Abraham:

Genesis 12:2-3 (ESV)

² *And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

² Ibid