

Jesus Wins—Satan Loses



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Revelation 12; Eph. 5:25–27, 32; Phil. 3:9; Dan. 7:25; Isa. 14:12–14; Rev. 13:14–17.*

Memory Text: “And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (*Revelation 12:17, NKJV*).

In *Outnumbered: Incredible Stories of History's Most Surprising Battlefield Upsets*, Cormac O'Brien recounts the stories of armies that, though seriously outnumbered, still won. It tells of Hannibal's army of 55,000 soldiers, from Carthage, defeating the “invincible” Roman army of 80,000 strong. It tells the amazing story of Alexander the Great's Greek army defeating the empire of Persia.

We, too, are in a life-and-death battle with a wily foe. We are outnumbered, fighting against incredible odds. The forces of evil appear invincible. We seem to be facing certain loss. Defeat seems inevitable. Victory appears out of sight. From a merely human perspective, it seems that Satan's forces will overwhelm us.

But, thank God, though we are outnumbered, though the odds are (humanly speaking) stacked against us, though Satan's attacks are vicious, through Jesus we will win at last. The theme of the Bible's last book, Revelation, is this: Jesus Wins, Satan Loses. The heart of this battle is outlined in Revelation 12, the focus of our study this week. This study will give a good preparation for understanding Revelation 14 and the three angels' messages.

* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 1.

The Battle in Heaven

Revelation 12 presents a stream of dramatic episodes, snapshots of the age-long conflict between good and evil that began in heaven but will end here on earth. These episodes take us down the stream of time, from the opening scene of Satan's rebellion in heaven to his vicious attacks on God's people in the last days.

Read Revelation 12:7–9, which describes this cosmic conflict between good and evil. How, possibly, could something like this happen in heaven? What do these verses imply about the reality of free will, free choice?

The freedom to choose is a fundamental principle of God's government, both in heaven and on earth. God neither created robots in heaven nor on earth. Created in the image of God, we as humans can make moral choices.

The power of choice is closely aligned with the ability to love. If you take away the power of choice, you destroy the ability to love, for love can never be forced or coerced. Love is an expression of free will. Every angel in heaven was faced with the choice either to respond to God's love or to turn away in selfishness, arrogance, and pride. Just as the heavenly angels were confronted by love with an eternal choice, Revelation presents each one of us with eternal choices in earth's final conflict.

There has never been neutrality in the great controversy (*see Luke 11:23*), and there will be none in earth's final war. Just as every angel chose Jesus' side or Lucifer's side, all humanity will be led to a final, irrevocable choice at the end of time. Who will have our allegiance, our worship, our obedience? This has always been the issue with humanity, and it will be so, however more dramatically, in the final crisis of earth's history.

But here is the incredibly good news: Revelation 12 describes Christ's triumph in the conflict, and all we have to do, using our free will, is choose to be on His side, the winning side. How great to be able to choose a side in a battle that you know, beforehand, it will win.

Think about how sacred free will and free choice must be to Jesus, who, though knowing that it would lead Him to the cross (*see 2 Tim. 1:9*), gave us free will anyway. What should this tell us about how carefully we should use this sacred, but costly, gift?

Satan's Attack

From the start, Satan sought to destroy Christ (*see Rev. 12:4, 5*). Yet, in every attempt, Satan failed. At Christ's birth, for instance, an angel warned Joseph and Mary about Herod's vicious plans, and they fled into Egypt. Jesus faced Satan's most enticing temptations in the wilderness with an "It is written," and thus found protection in the Word of God. In His death on the cross, He revealed the magnitude of His love and delivered us from the penalty of sin's condemnation. In His resurrection, as our living High Priest, He delivers us from the power of sin in our lives.

Read Revelation 12:4–6, 9; Ephesians 5:25–27, 32; and Psalm 2:7–9 and define the following symbols:

Dragon _____

Woman _____

Male Child _____

Rod of Iron _____

In the Bible, a rod is a symbol of dominion or rulership. A rod of iron is a symbol of an unbreakable, all-powerful, invincible rulership. Jesus faced every single temptation that we experience, but He came off a conqueror. The devil is a defeated foe. Christ has triumphed over him in His life, death, and resurrection. Because Jesus has already defeated the devil on Calvary's cross, we can be victorious, too. Christ's victory over Satan was complete, but the great controversy between Christ and Satan is not over yet.

Nevertheless, when we accept by faith what Christ has done for us, our sin debt is canceled and our sins are forgiven. We stand perfect before God, covered in Christ's righteousness. As Paul writes about being "found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith" (*Phil. 3:9, NKJV*). If we are forgiven, there is nothing that we can be accused of. Jesus conquered and overcame forever the worst that sin and evil could do to Him. He made the full assault on evil and overcame it. When we accept Jesus by faith, His victory is ours.

Why is the assurance of salvation, because of Christ's victory over Satan, so crucial to us? How can what Paul wrote in Philippians 3:9 be our own experience?

Accepting Jesus' Victory

As depicted in the Bible, Jesus has never lost a battle with Satan. He is the mighty Conqueror. He is the Victor over the powers of evil. It is one thing to believe that Jesus was victorious over the temptations of Satan; it is quite another thing to believe that Christ's victory is our victory, as well.

Read Revelation 12:10. What encouragement should you get from the fact that your accuser “has been cast down” (NKJV)?

Although the battle still rages on earth, Satan has lost. Period. This is true not only of Christ's ultimate victory at the climax of human history, but it also is true in our battle over the principalities and powers of evil in our personal lives. Some Christians live in frustrated defeat. They are hoping for victory over some attitude or habit but never grasp the reality of Christ's victory for them in their personal lives.

Read Revelation 12:11. What assurance of victory does Christ give us in this passage?

Seven times in Revelation's messages to the seven churches we find the expression, “he who overcomes.” Here in Revelation 12:11, we find this concept of overcoming again. The word “overcome” in the original language of the text is *nikao*. It can be literally translated “to conquer, to prevail, to triumph, or to come through victoriously.” Notice how it is possible for us to be overcomers. Revelation 12:11 affirms that it is “by the blood of the Lamb.”

In Revelation 5:6, in prophetic vision, John gazes into heaven and sees “a Lamb as though it had been slain” (NKJV). The sacrifice of Christ is the focus of the attention of all of heaven. There is nothing more sublime to demonstrate the infinite, unfathomable love of God than the Cross.

When we accept by faith what Christ has done for us, our debt is canceled, and we stand perfect in the sight of God. Our sins are forgiven (*Eph. 1:7, Col. 1:14, Col. 2:14*), and the “accuser of our brethren . . . has been cast down” (*Rev. 12:10, NKJV*). We are redeemed, victorious, and saved, not because of our own merits but because of Christ's victories in our behalf.

The Woman in the Wilderness

Read Revelation 12:6 and compare it to Revelation 12:14–16. Notice carefully the time period, Satan’s attack on the “woman” (God’s church), and God’s provision for His people. What are these verses talking about?

The 1,260 days in Revelation 12:6 are parallel to the time, times, and half a time in Revelation 12:14. This same time prophecy describing the same time period is found in Daniel 7:25; Revelation 11:2, 3; and Revelation 13:5. Because these are prophetic symbols (a literal woman with wings did not go into the wilderness), we apply prophetic time, the day-year principle (*see, for instance, Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:4–6*), to these prophecies. This means, simply, that one prophetic day equals one year. Commenting on this same prophetic period of time in Revelation 11:2, the *Andrews Study Bible* states, “Historicist interpreters, therefore, have generally understood the period of 1,260 prophetic days to mean 1,260 literal years running from A.D. 538 to 1798” (p. 1,673 comments on Revelation 11:2). A corrupt church—together with a corrupt state—oppressed, persecuted, and at times slaughtered God’s faithful people.

This fierce, satanic persecution of Bible-believing Christians was an extension of the great controversy between good and evil. Coming out of the darkness of the Middle Ages, at the time of the Reformation, men and women were faced with a choice. Would they be faithful to the Word of God, or would they accept the teachings of priests and prelates? Once again truth triumphed, and God had a people who were faithful to Him in the face of mighty opposition.

There are some fascinating and extremely encouraging expressions of God’s care in these verses. Revelation 12:6 uses the expression, “a place prepared by God” (*NKJV*). Revelation 12:14 declares that the woman was “nourished” in the wilderness, and Revelation 12:16 declares, “The earth helped the woman.” At times of severe persecution, God provided for His church. As He did then, He will do the same for His end-time remnant.

Describe a time of trial or difficulty in your own life when you could easily have become discouraged, but God provided a place of refuge for you and nourished you in your challenges. How did God provide support when you needed it most?

God's End-time Remnant

The devil has been at war with Christ since his rebellion in heaven (*Rev. 12:7*). Satan's purpose then and his purpose now is to seize control of the universe (*see Isa. 14:12–14*). The focus of his attention in the last days of earth's history is upon God's people. Revelation 12:17 emphatically declares that the dragon (Satan) was wroth (angry) with the woman (the church) and went to make war with the rest of her offspring. This expression, the rest of her offspring, also is translated "the remnant" in the King James Version. God's remnant remains loyal to Christ, obedient to His truth, and faithful to His mission.

Read Revelation 12:17. What characteristics of God's remnant, His last-day church, are found in this verse?

In Revelation 12:17, Satan (the dragon) is angry with the woman, God's church. The devil is furious with a people who keep the commandments of God, and he will do everything he can to destroy them.

Eventually, he instigates a decree so that they cannot buy or sell and will be imprisoned and face death (*see Rev. 13:14–17*). If Satan cannot destroy Christ, he will attempt to destroy the object of Christ's deepest affection—Christ's church. Earth's last war is not centered in the Middle East and the various conflicts there; it is centered in the minds of God's people scattered all over the world. It is a battle between two opposing forces, Christ and Satan. Again, no one is neutral.

The central question in this final war is, "Who has our loyalty? Where is our allegiance?" Heaven calls for believers who are so charmed by Christ's love, redeemed by His grace, committed to His purposes, empowered by His Spirit, and so obedient to His commands that they are willing to face death itself for His cause.

Our world is headed for a major crisis. But in Jesus, by Jesus, through Jesus, and because of Jesus, our victory is assured—just as long as we stay connected to Him, which we do by faith, a faith that leads to obedience. It all comes down to our own choice.

How do you see the reality of Revelation 12:17 played out in your own life, in your own Christian experience? That is, in what ways do you find the great controversy being played out in your own life?

Further Thought: In a sense, we could argue that God had no choice: if He wanted beings who could love Him and love others, He had to create them free. If they were not free, they could not love, and what would our universe be without love? It would be what some people have claimed: nothing but a mindless machine that works according to strict laws of cause and effect and in which we have no free will, no free choice, and are nothing but flesh-and-blood packets of subatomic particles that follow only the laws of physics. Not exactly a pretty picture, nor does it represent what we know, in and of ourselves, to be true. Who among us thinks, for instance, that our love for our parents, our children, our spouses is nothing but an arrangement of atoms?

“The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all intelligent beings depends upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love—service that springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced obedience; and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service.

“So long as all created beings acknowledged the allegiance of love, there was perfect harmony throughout the universe of God. It was the joy of the heavenly host to fulfill the purpose of their Creator. They delighted in reflecting His glory and showing forth His praise. And while love to God was supreme, love for one another was confident and unselfish. There was no note of discord to mar the celestial harmonies.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 34, 35.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Why is Revelation 12 a fitting introduction to the three angels' messages, especially in view of the coming conflict at the time of the end?
- 2 How is Revelation 12 reassuring to you personally in the temptations and trials you face daily?
- 3 There are some who believe that our actions are largely determined by our heredity and environment. Do you agree or disagree? What role does our choice have in determining our behavior? Discuss the relationship between our choice and God's power operating in our lives.

Run to Jesus

By ALICIA MARIE HARDING

Homeschooling, a smoothly running schedule, a clean house, homemade healthy meals. These things are good, and I am passionate about them as an American missionary mother raising four missionary kids in Zambia. But these things also are simply tools that help us honor Jesus. If the tools get in the way of Jesus, we need to run to Him.

It was about 10:00 A.M. We were in the middle of homeschool, and I also was multitasking with laundry and lunch preparation. Then one child snapped at another for making too much noise. Tears started flowing when a child couldn't figure out her math problem, and an argument erupted between two siblings insistent on getting their own way. My own frustration was festering because I had to keep repeating instructions to an inattentive child.

At that point, I knew I had two choices, I could give way to my flesh and with a harsh voice set everyone straight. Or I could go against my inclinations and with a sweet, cheerful voice invite all of us to take our problems to Jesus. What did we gain in work and school if Jesus wasn't in our hearts?

Smiling, I called each child by name. "Shayla," I said to my 11-year-old daughter. "Wesley," I said, turning to my nine-year-old son. "Sienna and Winston," I said to my seven-year-old daughter and three-year-old son. "We are going to take all our problems to Jesus and let Him help us fix them."

We knelt under a shade tree and told Jesus about our problems. We read in the Bible about how Jesus calmed the storm. We praised Jesus with a song. Then we shared hugs and started our day all over again—with Jesus. Again.

Walking back into the house, each child's spirit was subdued. Once inside, each child listened more carefully to my instructions. There was a willingness to work out disagreements in a respectful manner that focused on others, a sharp contrast with the earlier self-focused spirit. We were reminded that Jesus was near and His presence was more precious than any to-do list.

Ellen White writes, "Mothers who sigh for a missionary field have one at hand in their own home circle. . . . Are not the souls of her own children of as much value as the souls of the heathen? With what care and tenderness should she watch their growing minds and connect God with all their thoughts! Who can do this as well as a loving, God-fearing mother?" (*Adventist Home*, p. 245).



Motherhood is more than running a home. It's about running your little ones to Jesus.

Thank you for your mission offerings that support missionaries around the world.