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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes

INTRODUCTION

When the seventh trumpet is blown it ushers in the final episode telling us what is going to happen. Then we come to chapter 12 and get more details of this final climax. Today I am talking about, "How to Beat the Socks off the Devil" and in this passage of scripture we find some great insight on how to defeat the devil.

Revelation 12:1-6: "A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.

I. THE CAST OF CHARACTERS

I am calling this "The cast of characters," because we are introduced to three important characters in the final drama the final scenario. Revelation is full of symbolism and you need to find out what the symbols represent and believe literally the truth of the symbols. There are three symbols we are going to be looking at in this cast of characters.

1. The Woman

Who is the woman described in verse 1? It says she is "clothed with the sun with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head." Different groups have interpreted this in different ways. If you really want an interesting and a comical study, just go through all the different commentaries on who this woman is. Of course the Catholic Church says this woman is Mary, the mother of Jesus. It goes from that extreme all the way to the Christian Science religion which says it is Mary Baker Eddy. Christian Science is sort of like Grape Nuts Grape Nuts are neither grapes nor are they nuts they are just Grape Nuts. Christian Science is neither Christian nor Scientific it's just Christian Science. They say this woman is Mary Baker Eddy and on and on the interpretations go but let me tell you, this woman clearly is the nation of Israel. How do we know that? Look at the symbols that are used. You always let the Bible interpret the Bible. It talks about the sun the moon and twelve stars on her head in verse 1. Does that sound familiar to some of you? If you remember the story of Joseph in the Old Testament in Genesis, chapter 37 Joseph had a dream and in this dream he saw the sun and the moon which represented his father and his mother. His father is Jacob, or Israel, and 11 other stars bowing down to him, the one star. Now later in Genesis, of course, this was fulfilled when Joseph went down to Egypt and became the Prime Minister. His brothers and even his parents came and paid homage to him. That dream was fulfilled but that symbolism is too closely aligned with this to miss the point that the symbolism in Genesis 37, is of Israel and his descendants. So this is a picture of a woman representing the nation of Israel.

2. The Child

Who is the child? The Bible says she gives birth to a man child. Without a doubt this is the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. In Isaiah 6:9, the Bible says, “Unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given and the government shall be upon his shoulders.” Now the nation of Israel gave birth to the Lord Jesus Christ, because Jesus was of the lineage of David, the lineage of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So the nation of Israel is the group of people through whom the Messiah was born.

3. The Dragon

That leads us to the third character we meet: The dragon. More is said about the dragon than either the woman or the man child. Verse 3 talks about, “an enormous, red dragon with seven heads, and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. When you read that you say, “That is so fantastic! It’s so amazing! It really is like you have just had a bad dream or something.” This is symbolism. Fortunately, this is the easiest of all the symbols to interpret because verse 9 says, “the great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan,” so now we know without a doubt the dragon represents Satan himself. There are some who say Satan is only symbolic himself, that there is not a personal devil, the devil is only man’s personification of evil and there is no real personal devil. Some people think of the preeminence of evil as being Satan. No! The Bible teaches there is a literal, personal devil. Jesus spoke of him. Jesus did business with him. The symbolism is a dragon, but the true, literal thing it represents is the devil, himself. There is no such thing as a “red dragon” we know that, but there *is* such a thing as the devil.

What did it say about him in verse 3? You’ll learn a little bit about the devil tonight, not only how to defeat him, but a little bit about his strategy. It says, “He has seven heads.” Why does a dragon have seven heads? Because the head represents wisdom and in “Gematria,” the study of Jewish numbers, seven is the number for perfection. That means the devil has a lot of wisdom. He is really smart! I do not believe the devil can read your mind nor do I think he is omniscient (all-knowing) by any means—but he is highly intelligent. So the devil himself is very, very wise.

What does it say about ten horns and seven crowns? Look at the word “horns,” which represents power. “Crowns” represents authority. I believe this says the devil is going to express himself in the last days in governmental authority. The Bible says in Ephesians 6 that, “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the authorities, against the powers...and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 6:12) We’re going to see later that the Antichrist, who is indwelt by the spirit of the devil, will rule over a ten-nation confederation. Many people believe this means a revived Roman Empire.

Look at what is happening in Europe right now. Eastern Europe and Western Europe have been trying to get their act together and become unified. That’s what’s they are battling right now in England, whether or not to become a part of this European confederation. If all the nations in Europe joined together in a confederation, they would be the greatest power on earth. Many people believe this is going to be where the action takes place in the kingdom of the Antichrist. That’s what ten horns could mean—ten nations that join together.

We learn something else about the devil in verse 4. “His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky.” It is not talking about literal stars. Look at Revelation 9:1, “The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss” (the bottomless pit) “When *he*” you see it’s an angel; the star is represented by an angel. So in chapter 12 when it talks about the dragon, “sweeping a third of the stars out of heaven,” I believe that’s talking about when Satan was cast out of his position of being an anointed cherub, as it says in Ezekiel when he rebelled against God, he took one third of the angels with him. How many is that? We don’t know. The number of angels is never given in the Bible. There are an innumerable host of them and we believe those fallen angels are the evil spirits the demons in the world today. The good news is there are two *good* angels for every demon! AMEN! Twice the number so praise the Lord for that!

Notice what the devil tries to do in verse 4. “The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born.” It has always been the intent of Satan to destroy Jesus. I happen to believe the journey Mary and Joseph had to make to Bethlehem when she was nine months pregnant is a miracle in itself. I’ve been across that road. When I think she rode a donkey or walked that far near full-term pregnancy and did not miscarry, that was a miracle in itself! I believe the devil tried to get Mary to miscarry before Jesus was born and for sure we know this happened when Jesus was born. The devil used wicked Herod the Great, who sent the order down to Bethlehem to slay every male child 2 years old and younger. That is the dragon standing in front of the woman trying to kill the man child as soon as he was born.

Have you noticed throughout the ministry of Jesus how there were several times they tried to kill Jesus prematurely? When he preached at the synagogue in Nazareth, the Bible says they took him outside the city and were going to cast him off a cliff, but it was not his time yet and he walked through the midst of them. The devil was constantly trying to put Jesus to death. I even believe when Jesus went to the cross, the devil thought he was winning! But three days later he saw he had lost—the biggest blunder he ever made. So the devil has always tried to kill the Messiah.

Who is this Messiah? Verse 5 says, “He will rule all the nations with a rod of iron.” That comes from Psalm 2:9, that we read a couple of weeks ago. After Jesus was crucified and buried, he was resurrected and then was caught up to God and to his throne in heaven. This is a bit confusing, but between verse 5 and 6 there is a huge span of time, because verse 6 talks about something that it’s going to be talking about in verse 13 and the following verses where God is going to supernaturally protect the nation of Israel for 1,260 days—three and a half years half of the seven year Tribulation.

Let me put this in perspective again: Jesus Christ is going to come and rapture the church. I believe Christians will not be here during the time of the Tribulation. Then there will be a seven-year period of Tribulation during which time the Antichrist is going to come on the world scene and be a charismatic in terms of his personality, a world leader. The nations of the world are going to rally behind him. I believe for the first three and a half years everything is going to be pretty much as normal but then *after* three and a half years is literally when all Hell is going to

break loose on earth. That’s when all of these judgments of God will come and that’s why God has to protect and preserve the nation of Israel during this time. It is not the entire nation of Israel, but I believe many of those in the nation of Israel are going to turn to Jesus Christ during the time of the Tribulation. So that’s the cast of characters.

II. THE CONFLICT IN HEAVEN

Let’s move on and talk about the conflict in heaven verses 7-9. “And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.” There is spiritual warfare going on around us that is invisible to us but nevertheless it is going on. That’s why I encourage you to read those books by Frank Peretti *This Present Darkness* and *Piercing the Darkness*. It draws back the curtain and lets you see some of the spiritual warfare going on. Verse 8, “But he [Satan] was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.” This is the conflict in heaven.

Some of you are thinking, “Is that talking about when centuries and millenniums ago when Satan tried to rebel and set himself up as God and was cast out then?” I don’t believe so and most of the people who have studied this don’t believe so either. We believe this is talking about something that will happen sometime during the Tribulation. So what in the world is Satan still doing in heaven? We know that after he was cast out, he still had *access* to heaven. The Bible says, “One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them. The Lord said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the Lord, “From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it. Then the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.” Satan replied, ‘No wonder he is so good you’ve bribed him! You’ve set a hedge of protection around him. You’ve blessed him beyond measure, but I’ll tell you this, God! If you took away all of his blessings, he would curse your face’ God said, ‘No, he wouldn’t!’ The devil said, ‘Yes, he would!’ God said, ‘Okay, let’s see!’ and you know the rest of the story. (Job 1:6-12) Satan had access to the throne of God and even later we’re going to see Satan is the one who even at this moment as I speak to you is accusing us before God day and night. But the time is going to come when during the time of Tribulation, God is going to throw Satan out of his access to heaven and he’s going to be confined just to the earth.

Some people have the weirdest ideas about Satan. They really Satan is some guy in red longjohns down in Hell with a pitchfork and a whip cracking a whip over people shoveling coals into some furnace. The Bible says Jesus, said Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels but he is not there yet. The Bible calls Satan, “The Prince of the Power of this Air.” Jesus calls him, “The God of this world.” The Bible says he roams about seeking whom he may devour. You see that’s where he is right now but the time is going to come when he is going to be cast out of his access to heaven.

Look at what the Bible says about the devil in verse 9. It uses four words to describe the old devil. First it calls him a dragon. What is a dragon except a super serpent? A dragon is usually the most ferocious beast we can even imagine. Second, he’s called the serpent, because of his

subtlety a serpent is very subtle, but is very wise in fact. Jesus said we are to be “as wise as serpents, but as harmless as doves,” and the devil slithered his way into Eve’s personality. Third, he’s called “the devil” that word is *diabolos* which literally means, “the accuser the slanderer.” Then fourth, he is called *Satan* which is a word that means “adversary.” So from those four descriptions we see who he is and we also see in verse 9 what he tries to do, “he leads the whole world astray.” He is trying to lead everybody on earth away from worshiping God so they will worship him. That’s what Satan has always wanted—to be worshiped—that’s why there was conflict in heaven.

III. THE CONQUEST OF SATAN

Notice the conquest of Satan. When Satan was cast down to earth and no longer had access to heaven, he got angry and he takes it out on the people. Verse 10. “Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: ‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.’”

That is what the devil is doing right now. Not only is he the tempter, he is the accuser; he constantly accuses us before God. He even accuses us before *us*. That is part of his strategy to accuse you of how dirty and filthy and rotten you are. One of the biggest problems a lot of Christians have is how to distinguish between Holy Spirit conviction and satanic accusation. I’ve had a lot of people say to me, “I don’t know whether it is Satan accusing me or the Holy Spirit convicting me.” There are some big, huge differences and you need to know the differences.

First of all the Holy Spirit *never* convicts you of sin you’ve confessed and put under the blood of Jesus. So if there is some sin you’ve committed in your past and you’ve confessed it and put it under the blood of Jesus and then, you feel guilty about it later, it’s the devil accusing you not the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit never convicts you of sin you have confessed and put under the blood.

Number two, the Holy Spirit is always specific when he convicts you of sin. You won’t just have a general sense of guilt the Holy Spirit will point his finger and say, “You did this! You told this lie! You were proud at this point!” The devil on the other hand tries to give you sort of a general sense of guilt and shame just a burden of shame and guilt.

Number three, the Holy Spirit always points you toward the solution toward confession and cleansing. He says, “I convict you of this sin, but this is what you need to do. Confess it and be set free.” Whereas the devil accuses you and makes you feel hopelessly dirty and shameful.

Do you see the difference? The devil is the accuser of the brethren and the Holy Spirit convicts. I read a beautiful poem written about what to do and how we should react when the devil accuses us before God.

“I sinned and straightway post haste Satan flew
Before the presence of the Most-High God

And made a railing accusation there.
He said, "This soul. This thing of clay and sod
Has sinned. 'Tis true that he has named thy Name
But I demand his death for thou hast said,
"The soul that sinneth, it shall die!" Shall not
Thy sentence be fulfilled? Is justice dead?
Send now this wretched sinner to his doom.
What other thing can a righteous ruler do?"
And thus he did accuse me day and night.
And every word he spoke, O God, was true!

Then quickly One rose up from God's right hand,
Before his glory angels veiled their eyes.
He spoke. "Each dot and tittle of the law
Must be fulfilled." The guilty sinner dies!
But wait. Suppose his guilt were all transferred
To me and that I paid his penalty!
Behold my hands, my side, my feet! One day
I was made sin for him, and died that he,
Might be presented faultless, at thy throne."
And Satan fled away, full well he knew
That he could not prevail against such love.
For every word my dear Lord spoke was true!

– Mary Snell Nicholson

Isn't that beautiful? We have a D.A. in heaven—a devil accuser—who is always trying to say you are guilty before God, but thank God we have an advocate with the Father the Lord Jesus Christ who stands up before the Father and says, "It's true. He's a sinner but I have forgiven his sin."

So how are we going to beat the socks off the devil every day? Keep looking at verse 11. "They" This means literally the Tribulation Saints but it is the principle that is true today. "They overcame him." Who is him? Satan. "By the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he know that his time is short."

1. There is power to overcome Satan in Calvary

In verse 11 we see the three methods by which we can beat the socks off the devil. First, there is power to overcome Satan in Calvary because the Bible says, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." I want you to know that when you plead the blood of Jesus Christ, Satan trembles and flees. "There is power, power wonder-working power in the precious blood of the Lamb." Genesis 3:15 is the first Messianic prophecy in the Bible where it talks about when God is putting the curse upon the serpent and upon man and woman and he says to the devil "You shall bruise his heel, but the seed of woman shall crush your head!" When Jesus died on the cross and

shed his blood, that's when Satan's head was eternally crushed. There is power in the blood of Jesus. When Satan comes sneaking up to you and starts whispering in your ear and starts accusing and telling you how dirty, rotten, sinful you are you just turn to him and you say to him out loud, "Satan, my sins have been placed under the blood of Jesus Christ." Say it out loud to him. You say, "Isn't that praying to the devil?" No you're not praying to a cat when you tell it to "Scat!" Just rebuke him. Say, "My sins are under the blood of the Lamb." That's how you overcome him according to the word Calvary.

2. There is power to overcome Satan through confession

Number two is confession. "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony." If you want to overcome the devil you give your testimony. Every Christian has a testimony. You ought to give your testimony to Jesus. You ought to tell Jesus, "Thank you, Jesus, for what you did when you saved me!" He likes to hear it. You need to give your testimony to other people. They need to hear how Jesus saved you. You need to give your testimony to yourself and let yourself be reminded over and over again that once you were blind and now you can see, once you were lost and now you are found. You used to be headed toward Hell and now you've been saved and you are headed toward Heaven! But you need to give your testimony to the devil also. When he starts accusing you, you just say, "That's who I used to be, but on such and such a date at such and such a time I know without a doubt that Jesus Christ came into my life and I am a new creature in Christ. You can overcome him by the word of your testimony.

3. There is power to overcome Satan through commitment

The third way is through commitment. Look at the last part of verse 11. "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb" that's Calvary. "They overcame him by the word of their testimony" that's confession. "And they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death." Let me tell you what that will mean to the Tribulation Saints. Thousands and millions of them are going to die a martyr's death and we're going to see why, because they refuse to take the "mark of the beast." They are literally going to have to die for their faith in Jesus. That's commitment. So we need that same kind of commitment today to help us overcome the devil.

When the Roman Empire was expanding and sent out legions of soldiers to conquer new lands, every piece of property within sailing distance, they sent two or three ships to these remote countries and remote islands and they would bring their ships up on the shore. Then all the soldiers would get out with all of their weapons and all of their horses and all of their supplies. Then they would set their ships on fire and push them out into the water and watch as their ships would burn. The natives of those countries and those islands laid down their weapons and surrendered in the face of such commitment. The Roman soldiers said, "We did not come to retreat. We came to conquer or to die!" That's commitment. When you start burning your boats and start burning your bridges, you start discovering the kind of commitment that really does overcome the devil. That's how you can beat the socks off the devil claim the blood give your testimony and increase your commitment.

IV. THE CONFLICT ON EARTH

Finally, number four, look at the conflict on earth. What is going to happen after Satan is cast out of heaven and back down to earth? Verses 13-17. "When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to a place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach." That means one time two times, which makes three and a half, which makes three and a half times or three and a half years. Remember we are talking about the nation of Israel and the devil's attack on Israel. Keep reading in verse 15. "Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent." Many people think this means a "sea of armies" the Antichrist will use to attack Israel "But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth." We have already read that during this time there are going to be earthquakes all around Israel. Can't you picture an army pursuing the believers, the remnant of Israel and an earthquake opening up and swallowing this army? Verse 17. "Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus."

Why is it the Jews have always been such a persecuted people? Why is it Hitler tried to do what he called, "the final solution to the Jewish problem" by putting them to death killing over six million of them? Who's got something against the Jews? Satan has something against the Jews! He has been behind the persecution against them since time began and in the last days the nation of Israel is going to be attacked. It says God is going to take this remnant of believers of the nation of Israel to a prepared place in the desert.

Many Bible scholars believe it is an area to the east of Israel called Petra, the Red Rock City. I forget which movie it was, but in one of those Indiana Jones movies where they were in all these canyons and this "red rock valley," that's where it is. There is literally a place called Petra. I haven't been there, but many people have and there is some prophecy from the Ephemes. That doesn't appear in the Bible. By the way the Ephemes, the group out of which we believe John the Baptist came, the community of Qumran, they were fascinated with the book of Daniel. When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1948, they found eight copies of the book of Daniel. They studied Daniel more than any other book, because they believed in the apocalyptic literature and prophecy in it. They were the ones who said Petra is the place where God will preserve the nation of Israel for three and a half years. How it is going to happen and where it is going to happen all the details of it we're not certain, but we know something like that is going to happen.

Next time, when we study chapter 13, we are going to meet in more detail this Antichrist, this one who is called "the beast" who is going to lead this attack and this persecution against God's people. To sum it all up let me just say thank God Jesus has already promised to the believers, "I am going to keep you out of the time of Tribulation." If you haven't already done it, I want to give you this homework again. Read Matthew 24 and see what Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had to say about all of this. You're going to see that Jesus commanded the nation of Israel to do exactly what chapter 12 is talking about. Once you look at Matthew 24, Luke 21, Mark 13 and Revelation 12, you'll start saying, "There must be something to all of this!" God's word is true!

It is absolutely without error. Our interpretation may be at fault sometimes, but God’s word is true so you need to put your life and your hope and your trust into God who has written this book!

OUTLINE

I. THE CAST OF CHARACTERS (vs. 1-6)

1. The Woman: Israel
2. The Child: The Messiah
3. The Dragon: The devil

II. THE CONFLICT IN HEAVEN (vs. 7-9)

Satan is the "accuser of the brethren"

III. THE CONQUEST OF SATAN (vs. 10-12)

There is power to overcome Satan in:

1. Calvary (Genesis 3:15): "The blood of the Lamb"
2. Confession: "The word of their testimony"
3. Commitment: "They didn't love their lives unto death"

IV. THE CONFLICT ON EARTH (vs. 13-17)