

## Revelation: Because the Time Is Near

### Study #16: “Lucifer Had a Great Fall!” (Rev. 12:1-17)

Imagine the panic that would ensue if thousands of extra-terrestrials suddenly invaded your community, secretly taking over the minds and bodies of leaders in government, business, law enforcement, and education. Sound like the farfetched plot of a low budget science fiction movie like “Invasion of the Body Snatchers,” or “The War of the Worlds?” It’s not. It’s what is actually going on in every community on the face of the earth. In this case, the extra-terrestrials are not invaders from outer space. Nor are they visible to the human eye. For they are spiritual beings called angels—millions of fallen angels who sided with Lucifer in his rebellion against God and are now fighting day and night to lull Christians to sleep, so we don’t share the truth about Jesus, and confuse the minds of unbelievers in preparation for the coming Antichrist.

Paul warns us in Ephesians 6:12, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

That becomes vividly clear in this week’s study. In Revelation chapter 12, John gives us a glimpse behind the scenes at the power energizing the Beast and his kingdom. We learn that it is none other than “the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan.” He is the one who has deceived man and woman from the beginning and will someday soon demand the worship of everyone on earth. So be watchful as we study! These facts aren’t just interesting Bible trivia; they’re vital spiritual insights into what’s happening in your community this very moment. And as we unearth what’s underfoot, we need to take action—resisting temptation, praying without ceasing for those who do not yet believe, and sharing the truth with anyone who will listen. This is a war for men’s souls, and we need to be ready. The first thing to notice in this chapter are—

### TWO GREAT SIGNS IN HEAVEN

Chapter 12 begins John’s second vision in the book of Revelation. In chapter 1, he was told to write “the things which you have seen, the things which are, and the things which shall take place after these things.” But that writing assignment was completed in chapter 11. The Tribulation came to an end and “the kingdoms of the world” became “the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. So now John is told to “prophecy again about many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.” In other words, he’s to go back and color in the details of the Tribulation by describing its key characters and events. Chapter 12 introduces the first prophecy. Two signs appear in heaven identifying both the villain of the Tribulation and his intended victims.

#### A. The Sign of the Woman

Verse 1 begins, “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.”

The Bible often uses women as symbols of religion. For example, Ephesians 5:26 calls the church the Bride of Christ. On the other hand, Revelation 17 calls the false religion of the

Tribulation “Babylon the Great, Mother of Harlots.” But here in chapter 12, John sees “a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.” What religion does this represent? Two details make her identity clear.

First, **her clothing**. Perhaps you remember the dream of Joseph in Genesis 37 in which he saw the sun, moon, and the stars bowing down to him. There was no question in his or his brothers’ minds what this symbolized. It was a picture of his family, the household of Israel, bowing down to him in the future—once God exalted him to the position of second ruler of the land of Egypt. Here we find the same symbolism, making the identity of this woman clear. It is another picture of Israel, this time describing her future suffering during the Tribulation.

You can see that even more clearly in the description of **her child**. Verse 5 continues, “She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to His throne.” This is an obvious reference to Jesus Christ who following His death and resurrection, was caught up to the throne of heaven and who will someday rule this world with “a rod of iron.” Consequently, who must this woman be? Not Mary, because Mary never suffered the persecution described in this chapter. Nor could it happen to her, since she is now safe and secure in God’s presence. Instead, it’s a reference to the nation of Israel through whom the Messiah was given to the world.

Why would focus on Israel at this time? To emphasize the central that she will again play in the divine drama on earth. For the past 1946 years, Israel has been set aside while Christ has built His Bride, the church. But God has not forgotten His chosen people. Romans 11:25-26 says that “hardening in part has happened to Israel,” but that one day soon “all Israel will be saved.” And yet, before that time of blessings can come, another period of suffering is predicted for Israel. That’s symbolized in the second sign John sees in heaven—

## B. The Sign of the Dragon

Verse 3 explains, “Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his head.”

Who is this dragon? Verse 9 identifies him as “that ancient serpent called the devil, who leads the whole world astray.” Red symbolizes his thirst for blood. We know that because the same word is used in chapter 6 to describe the “fiery red” horse that brings warfare to earth. Jesus Himself called him “a murderer from the beginning.” (Jn. 8:44) And we find that here as well, that Satan will inspire a future bloodbath of unprecedented proportions, especially for the people of Israel. The “seven heads and ten horns” tell us how he’ll do it. If you compare this to Revelation 13:1, you’ll find that this is a symbol of Antichrist, indicating that it’s through him that Satan will bring destruction on earth. The “seven crowns,” on the other hand, picture the seven world empires that he has controlled in the past, reminding us that if he has been able to do it before, he is more than capable of doing it again.

Verse 4 adds, “His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth.” This describes the breadth of his power. For who do the stars represent? They are the devil’s partners in crime. For example, we saw in our study of Revelation 1:20 that stars are symbols for angels. John was told, “the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.” In

this case, however, they do not represent good angels, but evil angels who followed Lucifer in his rebellion against God. The Bible also refers to them as demons and unclean spirits. How many are involved? John says one-third of the angels God created. The good news, however, is that there are twice the number of good angels on our side than those on Lucifer's side.

John continues, "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." This refers to Satan's desire to prevent Jesus from being born. Who can forget Herod's attempt to kill the newborn King by ordering that all the baby boys in Bethlehem two years old and younger be slaughtered? But Satan's plan was thwarted by God when He warned Joseph in a dream to take the Child and His mother into Egypt until Herod was dead. In fact, it was only on the cross that Lucifer's plan was finally successful—for just three days! There he succeeded in having Jesus crucified, but three days later He rose from the dead, dealing a fatal blow to the devil. Hebrews 2:14 explains, "Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by His death, He might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil."

Having failed to kill the Savior, the devil searches for a way to vent his anger. So what does he do? Verse 6 says the target of his hatred is the woman. Unable to prevent the birth of her Child, he tries to exterminate the people of Israel. This began in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, killing and enslaving millions of Jews. It continued during the Crusades of the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, when hundreds of thousands of Jews were murdered. Hitler killed 6 million more in World War II. Stalin persecuted millions more in the Soviet Union. Now Antichrist will lead the world in another Holocaust greater than that of Hitler. But all these efforts will fail. Why? Because God has promised to preserve the people of Israel forever!

Napoleon was asked by one of his generals, "What do you believe to be the greatest miracle of all time?" The conqueror answered without hesitation, "The Jews!" He was right! More than any other phenomenon in history, the survival of the Jews is proof that the God of the Bible exists. Who would have guessed that after wandering throughout the world without a homeland for 1878 years, Israel would again become an independent nation? But to the world's amazement, they did so in May of 1948, going on to become the most powerful nation in the Middle East, winning war after war against Muslim nations much larger than they. And at the end of the Tribulation, with all the nations of the world gathered together to destroy them, who would believe that a kingdom would again be born in Israel? But that's exactly what will happen through the supernatural goodness and intervention of Jesus their Messiah and King.

## **THE GREAT ANGELIC WAR IN HEAVEN**

In verse 7 to 12, John now turns from Satan's past history of crime to his future activities in heaven and on earth. Make no mistake! There is ferocious spiritual warfare taking place in the heavenlies right now, events about which you and I can only speculate. But at the midpoint of the Tribulation, a great angelic war of unprecedented proportions will break out in heaven, determining not only the final dominion of the angels, but also the persecution and suffering that is about to be experienced on earth.

### **A. The Description of Satan's Defeat**

Verse 7 reads: “And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he 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.”

According to John, the war that is about to break out in heaven will pit the angelic armies of Michael against the demonic forces of Lucifer. That’s appropriate since Michael’s name, which means “Who is like God?” is the perfect answer to Lucifer’s boast, “I will be like the Most High!” This is not the first time the two have met in conflict. Daniel 10 says they once battled over the delivery of a prophetic message sent to Daniel. Jude 1:9 adds that they also argued over the body of Moses. But this will be their last and greatest battle. For verse 8 says at this point the dragon and his angels will be defeated and confined to the earth with no more access to heaven.

This may be confusing to some. After all, wasn’t Satan cast out of heaven ages ago? He was and he wasn’t. According to the Bible, there are several phases in Satan’s judgment, some of which have passed and some of which are yet to come. At his first attempt to make himself equal with God, Lucifer was cast down in the sense that he lost his original position in heaven. This is described in Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28, and here in verse 4. At that time, one-third of the angels sided with him in his rebellion. Jude 1:6 adds, “The angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these He has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great day.” That doesn’t mean that Lucifer has lost all his access to heaven. It simply means that his original power and glory were stripped away from him.

I liken it to former president Richard Nixon who left office in disgrace. At his resignation, he no longer enjoyed the power or privileges of the presidency. But did visit the White House from time to time. And so it is with Lucifer! He no longer has any official position, but he still has access to God’s presence. We find that in the first two chapters of the book of Job. And here in verse 10, we’re told that he still has the ability to accuse us before God day and night.

Other judgments in Lucifer’s career include his defeat at the cross. Colossians 2:15 says Christ “disarmed the powers and authorities” and made a “public spectacle of them, triumphing over them.” His next major loss will take place at the end of the Tribulation and the beginning of the Kingdom when he is confined in the bottomless pit for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3) and no longer able to tempt mankind. And finally, he will be forever damned when he and his demons are cast into the lake of fire which burns forever and ever. (Rev. 20:10) But, again, the primary concern of our passage is his final war with Michael, at the midpoint of the Tribulation, when he is cast out of heaven and confined to the earth.

What incites such a war in heaven? Some say his hatred of Christ will spur him to make one final assault on God’s throne. But Dr. Warren Wiersbe offers another explanation which may have more merit. After the church is taken up to heaven in the Rapture and the Tribulation is set in motion, the first order of business in heaven will be the Judgment Seat of Christ and rewarding of the saints. (2 Cor. 5:10-11). There the works of Christians will be examined and rewards will be given out. But guess who still has access to heaven? Satan, who will accuse the saints pointing out all our faults and flaws. But Jesus Christ, our heavenly advocate (1 Jn. 2:2), will also be there and stand up for us before His Father’s throne, arguing our case and reminding all of creation that He secured our salvation by His death on the cross. Imagine how furious Satan will be when

the church comes through this judgment “without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing!” Warren Wiersbe concludes, “When the accuser of the brethren sees that his tactics have failed, he will become furious and threaten the very peace of heaven.”

## B. The Results of Satan’s Defeat

Verse 10 announces, “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. They overcome him 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.’”

### 1) Rejoicing in Heaven

Why is heaven so happy at Michael’s victory? Because Satan, the accuser of the brethren, is no longer allowed to find fault with us. That’s always been one of his most cutting tools. The name *devil* means “accuser.” And day and night he stands before God’s throne leveling charges against us—if not about our words and actions, then attributing wrong motives to us. The best example is found in the book of Job, where after snooping about the earth, Satan appears before God’s throne. So God asks him to consider his servant Job. Immediately, Satan criticizes him, accusing him of serving God for gain. And he does the same to us today. He accuses us inciting gossip in the church, which ought to make us very careful about repeating rumors that we hear. For in so doing, whose will are we carrying out? Not God’s, but Satan’s! He also accuses our consciences with sins already confessed and forgiven. How do we overcome these painful lies? John pinpoints three keys to victory in verse 11.

**First, “they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.”** In other words, the first thing to do when the devil comes knocking at your door is to remind him that Jesus already shed His blood for those sins, and they don’t have to be paid for again. Our salvation is not based on any good deeds that we have done, but by the finished work of Christ’s grace on the cross.

***Just as I am without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me,  
And that Thou bidd’st me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come! I come!***

**Second, “they overcame him by the word of their testimony.”** A second fact to remember when Satan comes calling is that his strategy to intimidate us and make us feel unworthy of sharing our faith in Christ. Hal Lindsey issues the following warning:

“The devil will use every clever device he has to keep us from sharing with others what God has done in our lives. A guy who may have been the life of the party and never at loss for words before he trusted Christ can be intimidated by Satan to clam up like a shell when it comes to witnessing for Christ. Grown men will tremble in front of youngsters when asked to give a word for Jesus. Remember Peter in the Gospel of Mark and the young girl who asked him if he’d been a friend of Jesus; Peter not only denied it but swore at her also! The reason this is such a threat to Satan is that God has chosen to give His children the privilege of bringing men into His Kingdom by their testimony—both by what they say and how they live. For this reason, nothing gives Satan more pleasure than to foul up a believer’s testimony in word and life.

So don't let him intimidate you! The next time the devil comes peddling guilt or fear, remember who it's coming from, why he's doing it, and that he is a liar and the father of lies. And remember one more thing. Satan is more afraid of your testimony than you are to give it. For, as Romans 1:16 says, "it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes."

**Third, they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.** You see, as long as we cling to this life and the things it offers, Satan will render us ineffective by threatening to take them away from us. But when we commit ourselves and everything we own to Christ, it sets us free. So, as Corrie Ten Boom, the Nazi concentration camp survivor, advised, "Learn to hold all things loosely in your hands, so that it doesn't hurt too much if they're snatched away."

Heaven rejoices at Satan's expulsion, but John foresees a very different outcome for those living below on earth—the greatest time of suffering the world has ever experienced.

## 2) Suffering on Earth

Verse 12 warns, "But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short." The word **fury** is different from the one used to describe God's anger. This word means a "violent outburst of anger," like a rebellious child whose will is thwarted. The devil vents his rage by throwing a 3 ½ year temper tantrum on earth. But unlike a child, Satan's temper can do great harm. For he is a powerful, vicious being capable of terrible destruction. This destruction begins with his persecution of Israel. Verse 13 explains, "When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child."

That raises two questions. Why does Satan hate the Jews? **Reason #1 is because she gave birth to Messiah.** Satan has always hated the Jews for providing the world with a Savior and means of salvation. Therefore, once his access to heaven is cut off, his first impulse will be to persecute the woman who gave birth to Messiah, sparking a new wave of anti-Semitism, that is beginning even now. Radical Islam's goal is to destroy both the nation and people of Israel. Even in America, which has long been a safe harbor for the Chosen People, the FBI now reports that 18% of hate crimes are committed against the Jews. **Reason #2 is Satan's desire to prevent the Kingdom from coming to earth.** The Bible teaches that in order for the Kingdom to be set up, a Jewish remnant must remain alive to welcome their King and repopulate the earth for God. (Zech. 14:1-4) So convinced that he can keep the Kingdom from coming, Satan will again try to exterminate the Jews. Will he be successful? No! That's the second point in these final verses—God's faithful protection of His Chosen People. That's seen in three ways:

First, the length of Satan's tantrum. Verse 12 says his wrath is great, "because he knows his time is short." Or to put it another way, God has him on a short leash. Specifically, verse 14 says he will be allowed to persecute the woman "a time, times, and half a time." This refers to the 3 ½ years or 1260 days mentioned in verse 6. The point is, Satan is limited in what he can do, and he knows it. He is subject to God's plans and can only do what God permits.

***The prince of darkness grim—we tremble not for him.  
His rage we can endure. For lo, his doom is sure!  
One little word shall fell him.***

Second, the place of God's protection. Verse 14 promises Israel, "two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert." The wings of an eagle are a symbol of God's protection. For example, when God led the children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt, the Bible says He bore them "on eagles' wings" (Ex. 19:4) and cared for them in the wilderness as an eagle cares for her young (Deut. 32:11-12.) Hal Lindsey speculates that this may refer to an American airlift which will transport the people of Israel to the ancient fortress city of Petra. But the text gives no such explanation. All we can say for sure is that God will somehow save His people from destruction. Warren Wiersbe cautions, "We do not know where this sheltered place will be, nor do we need to know. But the lesson for all of us is clear: God cares for those whom He wants to use to accomplish His purposes on earth."

Third, the destruction of Satan's armies. In verse 15, John describes a flood of water which the serpent spews at the woman in an effort to destroy her. To what does this refer? Jeremiah 46 and 47 use the word "flood" to describe two massive military invasions of Israel. So I assume that's what's envisioned here. But God will not allow it to succeed. Instead, John says God will cause the earth to open up and swallow "the river that the dragon spewed out of his mouth, "referring I all likelihood to the massive earthquake which will occur in Revelation 16:18 near the end of the Great Tribulation. But will this cause Satan to give up in frustration? No. Lesson #1 in spiritual warfare is that the old serpent the devil never gives up.

Enraged at his inability to kill the woman herself, verse 17 says he immediately turns to attack her offspring. To whom does this refer? John explains that they are "those who obey the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus." In other words, when Satan fails to destroy Israel, he will vent his wrath by persecuting anyone who claims the name of Christ. But will he win? No! Why? Because like us, the devil is only a creature, not the Creator.

C. S. Lewis explained, "The commonest question I'm asked is if I 'believe in the devil.' Now, if by devil you mean a power opposite to God and, like God, self-existent from all eternity, the answer is certainly No. There is no uncreated being except God. God has no opposite. No being could attain a 'perfect badness' equal to the perfect goodness of God; for when you've taken away every good thing (intelligence, will, memory, energy, and existence itself), there'd be none of him left." The question is if I believe in devils. I do. That is to say, I believe in angels, and I believe that some of these, by the abuse of their free will, have become enemies of God and as a corollary to us. These we may call devils. They do not differ in nature from good angels but their nature is depraved. Devil is the opposite of angel only as bad man is the opposite of good man. Satan, the dictator of the devils, is the opposite not of God, but of Michael."

During the Tribulation, Lucifer will lead them in a war against God and His saints both in heaven and on earth. But because he's a creature and not the Creator, he will fail miserably and be punished forever. In keeping with His promise to Eve (Gen. 3:15), Jesus Christ, the woman's seed, will "crush" the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15) and we will be free forever! Hallelujah!