

Rev. 12-14, The Three-Phased War
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Overview

After summary in 12:1-6, we look in more detail at the relation between the woman and the dragon. John divides the conflict into three stages. The first has been going on since the Lord Jesus' advent; the other two are specific to the Great Tribulation.
12:7-12, In heaven, against the Angels
12:13-16, On earth, against the Woman
12:17-14:20, On earth, against the woman's seed

Today, consider the battle in heaven against the angels. To understand it, must distinguish Satan's Sin, his Work, and his Fall.

A. Satan's Sin

1. Only clear description is Ezek. 28:12ff, in Eden! Contrast this king of Tyre with the Prince of Tyre in 28:2ff, who is expressly said to "be a man and no God" in 28:9, and compare the dual powers of Daniel 10:13, 20, 21. His sin may have been in the very act of tempting Adam, seeking to challenge God for his place as man's Lord.
2. No clear reason to take Isa. 14:12ff of Satan (though "man" in v.16 is 'iyš, which can represent an angel (Josh. 5:13) or even God (Exod. 15:3)).

B. Satan's Work

"Satan" is a Hebrew word meaning "accuser." He is heaven's prosecuting attorney; grants him access to heaven.

1. Job 1, to accuse Job
2. Zech. 3:1, accusing Joshua the high priest
3. Eph. 6:12, where the wicked forces are--even in church age. ("High" = "Heavenly"; cf. 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10)
4. Conclude that even now he has access there.

C. Satan's Fall

1. John 12:31, his casting out (*ekballw*, cf. *ballw* in Rev. 12:9) is based upon our Lord's work on Calvary; but note the change in tense:
 - a) Now IS the judgment of this world (present; at that time)
 - b) Now SHALL the prince of this world be cast out (future; must be later than Eph. 6:12). He is a defeated foe awaiting his final defeat; cf. Hitler after D-Day.
2. Luke 10:18, in discussing the ministry of the 70, the Lord reports, "I was seeing [imperfect tense] Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Suggests that their ministry was contributing toward this effect.
3. Our text relates this fall from heaven to a heavenly conflict between Michael and Satan and their respective angels.

4. To bring Luke 10 and Rev. 12 together, recall Dan. 10 again: earthly conflicts mirror heavenly ones.

- a) Antiochus vs. the Jews
- b) the disciples vs. unbelievers
- c) the church's witness today.

Christ has dealt him the fatal blow at Calvary, and now each battle in which we engage brings him closer to the brink.

Conclude: The war in heaven describes the present state of affairs, one that has been going on since the OT. Since Calvary, Satan's side has been losing, and one day he will be denied all access to heaven. That day has not yet come. Probably this is what initiates the Great Tribulation.

Application: Two encouragements for us in our daily spiritual battles:

- a) Our foe has felt the mortal blow of Calvary.
- b) We do not battle alone; our conflicts reflect the heavenly battles between angelic and demonic forces.

D. 10-12, The Commentary

1. 10b, 11 describes the conflict that has ended with the expulsion of Satan.

- a) 10b, Satan has been the accuser, who seeks to invoke God's righteous wrath on humans.
- b) 11, our defense against Satan:
 - 1) The blood of the Lamb, which furnishes the righteous basis for our Savior's continual intercession for us.
 - 2) The word of our testimony, encouraging one another and showing our adversaries that they have not succeeded.
 - 3) Disregard for our own life. The paradox enunciated by our Lord: he who would save his life shall lose it, but whoever would lose his life for the sake of Christ and the gospel, the same shall save it (Mark 8:35 and parallels). Satan's hook into us is to get us to live for ourselves. Spiritual victory is ours only if we live for the Lord.

As we do these things, we contribute to the defeat of Satan, and support the great heavenly battle that will one day cast him out. If we do not do these things, we are traitors to heaven and are supporting the enemy.

2. 10a, The Outcome: four things are realized through this victory. The first two concern believers; the second two, our God.

- a) Salvation: with no accuser left in heaven, the issue of our sin is put away.
- b) Strength: Satan's heavenly accusations are reflected in our doubts and uncertainty. Think of the strength the tribulation saints will enjoy because those accusations have ceased.
- c) God's kingdom and Christ's authority: finally realized "on earth, as it is in heaven."

3. 12, The Response:

- a) Rejoicing by heaven's citizens for this additional reduction in the Devil's power.
- b) Mourning by the inhabitants of the earth because of the intensified wrath of the Devil.

Summary

We need to recognize

1. the spiritual dimensions of our present struggle; we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against ... spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, Eph. 6:12. Every action we take, every word spoken for our Lord, every sin we commit, echoes throughout the corridors of heaven.
2. the weapons of our warfare: not carnal, but spiritual:
 - a) the blood of the lamb--must begin by receiving Christ
 - b) the word of our testimony--can't just sit on the sideline
 - c) love not our lives--if we live for our own satisfaction, we have handed the battle to the enemy.

Hymn: Onward, Christian Soldiers