

In the first part of the book of Revelation, we saw a great sign in heaven: a woman who was giving birth to a son, a great red dragon seeking to devour the child, and the child being taken up into heaven, and the woman fled into the wilderness where she would be taken care of for 1260 days. And as we heard last week, that is a picture of our experience as Christians, all the things that we go through. Because the woman is a picture of the Church, the child is a picture of Christ, and the dragon is a picture of Satan himself. But now in our reading for tonight, we're going back and looking at some of the more specific details. It's like John is rewinding the tape a little bit so that we can look at it from a different angle. Because we're no longer looking at this from the perspective of earth, but rather from the perspective of heaven.

And what is the picture that John gives us? It's actually pretty spectacular. A war, he says, arises in heaven. Angels fighting against angels. Michael fighting against Satan. It's all very exciting stuff. It almost seems like it's something that would come out of a movie, to see all of these angels fighting at the climax of the movie. The whole screen is filled with this battle. It seems very exciting! But we have to remember, Christians, that Revelation is a symbolic book. The woman is a symbol of the Church. The child is a symbol of Christ. The dragon is even a symbol of Satan. It shows what his true nature is. Which means that this is also symbolic, and if we want to understand what it means, we're going to have to first understand something about the nature of Satan. We need to see what the Bible says about him, why it even calls him Satan, and then we will be able to understand what is happening here in Revelation chapter 12.

So what does the Bible say about Satan? Well, the Bible calls him by many names. John calls him the "deceiver" here in Revelation. Peter in the book of 1 Peter calls him "a roaring lion, seeking whom he would devour." Matthew in the Gospel calls him the "tempter," the one who tempted Jesus in the wilderness. But I think it is his name Satan that best describes who he is. Because Satan is not just a name. Satan is also a word. The word "satan" in Hebrew means an adversary, an opponent, somebody who stands against someone else. It can also mean that Satan is an accuser, someone who brings an accusation, like someone who is accusing somebody in court. You might even be able to say that the devil is something of a lawyer.

But in this case, Christians, we see this all throughout the Scriptures. Take, for example, Psalm 109, where it says this: "Appoint a wicked man against him; let an accuser"—let a satan—"stand at his right hand. When he is tried, let him come forth guilty; let his prayer be counted as sin!" So Satan is seeking to accuse, because he wants to convict us. He wants to accuse us and show that we are guilty of the sins that we have committed. That's the picture that we see the most often of Satan throughout the Bible. His weapons are not swords or clubs or even his hands. Satan's weapons are his words, the accusations that he makes against the people of God.

Take, for example, the book of Job. Job says that Satan was standing before God, and God begins to praise Job for all the things that he has done. God says that he is an upstanding man, that he is righteous in his generation, that he is blameless. "Have you considered all the things that my servant Job has done?" But Satan accuses Job. He says the only reason why he fears God is because his life has been easy. It's easy to believe in God when things are going pretty well! And Satan himself says in Job chapter 1: "But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face." Take it all away, Satan says. Take away everything that he trusts in, and you'll see what he's really like. You will see the real Job. Satan accuses him of

believing only when it's easy to believe. And Job will eventually prove him wrong, but not before suffering many things at the hands of Satan.

We see another example in Zechariah chapter 3, where the high priest at that time, whose name was Joshua, is shown standing before the Lord dressed in filthy garments. Those dirty clothes were a symbol of his sins. Because even though he was part of the generation that came back from exile, like so many in that generation he had done some things he was not supposed to do. He was not as righteous as he should have been. And so in Zechariah 3, we hear: "Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him." Satan is quick to point out Joshua's sins. He is quick to show why he deserves to be condemned, and the only reason Joshua escapes Satan is because of God.

One last example comes from the book of Jude. Verse 9 says this: "But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you.'" Because in the Old Testament when Moses died, it says that his body could not be found. Nobody knew where he went. But Jude tells us that there was a dispute between heaven and Satan about where that body should go. Satan was basically saying that Moses should not be able to enter heaven because of all the things that he had done. He murdered the Egyptian, after all, and God forbade him from going into the promised land. This is all public knowledge. This is all a public record. He's not saying anything secret! For these reasons, Moses should not get into heaven. But the archangel Michael rebukes Satan and says that it is not Satan who will decide where Moses goes, but the Lord. So in all of these examples then, Christians, we see Satan as he is. He is the accuser, one who is quick to point out sin, one who is quick to point to how far short we have fallen of the glory of God.

So why, then, does the Bible call him a deceiver? Why does the Bible call him a roaring lion or a tempter? If he's the accuser, doesn't that just mean that he points things out? That he's just saying what has already happened? He could even say these things and speak the truth. Why is he these other things too? He is the deceiver, Christians, because he also wants to lead us into sin. He doesn't want to just show how we have failed. He wants to make us fail more so that he can accuse us more before God. This is why Jesus says about the devil in John chapter 8: "He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies." Just take the book of Genesis as a perfect example of this. Satan comes to Eve in the form of the serpent, and he lies to her. And with that lie, he deceives her into taking the forbidden fruit. Through his lie, sin enters into the world, and he is quick to condemn us for that sin, and rightly so, even though he was the one who led Adam and Eve into that sin in the first place. This is why he is both the accuser and the deceiver. He wants us to fall, and he wants to accuse us when we do fall, so that we would finally be destroyed.

What are we supposed to do? What can we do against the devil? Can we say that he's not telling the truth, that the things that he is accusing us of just aren't true, that we're really not guilty? Of course not. The devil might lie to get us to fall, but he doesn't have to lie when he talks about the things that we have done. Even the smallest sin that we have committed, Christians, is enough to keep us away from God. Maybe we can just resist him, that we'll resist his temptations, that we won't give in to his deceptions because of ourselves. That's not going to work, either. Because

Adam and Eve were perfect, and yet they were deceived. How much more so will we be deceived who are corrupted by sin? On our own we don't stand a chance. On our own we cannot stand against him.

But we're not on our own. Satan has been defeated. That's the point of Revelation 12. That war in heaven most likely started with another accusation from Satan. He was up to his old tricks again, accusing the people of God of their sins before the Lord. But it was for the last time. Because Michael and his archangels rebuke the devil. They said that his accusations were no longer valid. God would no longer listen to what Satan had to say. And so Satan was driven out of heaven forever. Now why is this the case? Why does God not listen to him? Why do his accusations no longer have force? Because God himself has silenced him, Christians. God himself has taken away his ability to accuse us. This is why John, speaking about the saints, says in verse 11: "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." The blood of Jesus has silenced the accusations of the devil. Through that blood, Christians, we have been forgiven. Covered with that blood, we are no longer guilty. The judgment's already been made. The verdict has already been passed. There is no condemnation for those who believe in Jesus Christ! And whatever accusation the devil might bring against us, it doesn't matter anymore, because it has already been dealt with on the cross. And God is not going to reopen the trial. He's not going to try us again. It is finished. And Satan has been cast down, where he waits for his own trial when he will be punished forever for all of his lies and all of his deceptions towards the children of men.

The devil's not happy about that, of course. And he's going to still do everything that he can to try to destroy us. In fact, that's the whole point of the last part of this chapter, which we'll get to next week. But keep this in mind, Christians: the devil is our enemy, and he is strong, but he is already defeated. He has already lost. The death of Christ has silenced him forever. This is why Paul can say in Romans chapter 8: "Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us." And if Christ is on our side, who could possibly be against us? Not even Satan himself can take us away from the Lord!

So resist him, Christians. Resist the devil. Stand firm in your faith. Fight against him with all that you have. Because those who believe in him have been covered with the blood of Jesus. And through that blood, the victory of Christ is yours forever. No one, not even Satan, can ever take that away!

Let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, who has shed your blood on the cross so that we would be forgiven, strengthen us against all the assaults of the devil who rages against your Church, and keep us ever steadfast in faith, knowing that you have already defeated him on the cross; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.