

NOON BIBLE STUDY: REVELATION 12

WE ENTER ANOTHER INTERLUDE OF SORTS AFTER THE SOUNDING OF THE 7TH TRUMPET IN REVELATION 11. THE 7TH TRUMPET SIGNALS THE RETURN OF JESUS, THE GATHERING OF GOD'S PEOPLE AND THE (FIRST) RESURRECTION. THERE IS MORE TO COME FOR SURE (AFTER ALL, WE'RE ONLY IN CHAPTER 12!), BUT THAT WAS A SIGNIFICANT MOMENT THAT WE'VE BEEN (AND IN REALITY STILL ARE) WAITING FOR.

BEFORE WE LOOK AT WHAT IS NEXT, A MOMENT TO PREVIEW HOW WE WILL WORK THROUGH REVELATION 12. THERE ARE A LOT OF IMAGES, SYMBOLS, CHARACTERS AND LAYERS TO THE NEXT 17 VERSES. WE COULD TRY TO DISSECT THE MEANING OF EACH STAR, CROWN, AND NUMBER - SURELY A WORTHWHILE EFFORT AT SOME POINT. HOWEVER, OUR APPROACH IS TO *FIRST* UNDERSTAND THE BASIC STORY THAT IS BEING TOLD AND THE MAIN MESSAGE THAT IS BEING COMMUNICATED TO THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST CENTURY FROM JESUS AND THEN WHAT IT MEANS FOR US IN THE 21ST. IF WE DON'T GET THE FOUNDATION OF WHAT IS BEING TOLD AND SHOWN, WE ARE LIKELY TO GET CAUGHT UP IN THE MINOR DETAILS, WHICH ARE ALSO FROM GOD AND IN SCRIPTURE, BUT ARE THE *INTERMEDIATE* STEP IN BIBLE STUDY.

IN OTHER WORDS, YOU HAVE TO KNOW THAT $1+1 = 2$ IN ORDER TO KNOW THAT 111^2 (SQUARED) IS 12,321.

REVELATION 11:19-12:4 - ATTENTION BACK TOWARDS HEAVEN

WHAT DOES JOHN SEE NEXT? FIRST:

- TEMPLE OF GOD WHICH IS IN HEAVEN
- ARK OF THE COVENANT APPEARING IN THAT TEMPLE
- FLASHES OF LIGHTNING, SOUNDS AND PEALS OF THUNDER, EARTHQUAKE AND HAIL STORM

→ PHYSICAL OF GOD'S PRESENCE AND POWER.

→ NATURAL WONDERS WHICH GET ONE'S ATTENTION AND ARE OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH FEAR AND AWE.

THE 7TH TRUMPET, SIGNALING THE RETURN OF THE MESSIAH BEGINS TO OPEN THE HEAVEN WINDOW TOWARDS THE ONLOOKING EARTH. THIS REMINDS US OF THE LORD'S PRAYER FOR GOD'S KINGDOM TO COME, GOD'S WILL TO BE DONE, ON EARTH AS IT IS DONE IN HEAVEN. THIS IS BOTH EXCITING AND TERRIFYING.

SECOND: A GREAT SIGN APPEARING IN HEAVEN

- A PREGNANT WOMAN CLOTHED WITH SUN, MOON UNDER HER FEET AND A CROWN OF TWELVE STARS ON HER HEAD
- A DESCRIPTION OF HER BEGINNING TO GIVE BIRTH TO THIS CHILD

THIRD: ANOTHER SIGN IN HEAVEN

- A GREAT RED DRAGON WITH SEVEN HEADS AND TEN HORNS WITH 7 DIADEMS (CROWNS)
- THE DRAGON'S TAIL "SWEEPS AWAY" A THIRD OF THE "STARS OF HEAVEN" AND THROWS THEM TO THE EARTH.
- DRAGON STANDS BEFORE THE BIRTHING WOMAN DETERMINED TO "DEVOUR HER CHILD" WHEN SHE GIVES BIRTH.

REVELATION 12:5-6 - THE WOMAN GIVES BIRTH, THE MOTHER & CHILD SAVED

WHAT DOES JOHN SEE NEXT?

- **V. 5** - "A MALE CHILD WHO IS TO RULE ALL THE NATIONS WITH A ROD OF IRON" IS A REFERENCE TO THE MESSIAH AS PROPHESED IN PSALM 2:9. THIS VERSE IS THE CLEAREST INFORMATION TO HELP US IDENTIFY THE CHILD AS WELL AS THE MOTHER IN THIS VISION.
- IN THIS VISION, THE CHILD IS RESCUED AND MOVES FROM BEING ALMOST EATEN BY A DRAGON TO THE THRONE OF GOD. THE WOMAN FLEES THE DRAGON AND REMAINS (AND IS CARED FOR) IN A WILDERNESS HIDING PLACE THAT GOD PROVIDES FOR A BRIEF TIME (1260 DAYS, WHICH IS COMPARABLE TO THE THREE AND HALF YEARS, CP REV. 11:3).

BEFORE WE MOVE ON, THIS MIGHT BE A GOOD TIME TO BEGIN TO IDENTIFY SOME OF WHAT IS BEING COMMUNICATED. THERE ARE LAYERS TO THIS VISION, BUT THE READER CERTAINLY SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT THE CHILD IN 12:5 IS JESUS. AND THE CHRISTMAS STORY FINDS A SURPRISING PLACE IN THIS PROPHETIC BOOK.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS WAS A PRETTY BIG DEAL. HERE'S WHAT WAS SPOKEN IN ANTICIPATION OF HIS BIRTH:

TO MARY: LUKE 1:30-33 - THE ANGEL SAID TO HER, "DO NOT BE AFRAID, MARY; FOR YOU HAVE FOUND FAVOR WITH GOD. 31 "AND BEHOLD, YOU WILL CONCEIVE IN YOUR WOMB AND BEAR A SON, AND YOU SHALL NAME HIM JESUS. 32 "HE WILL BE GREAT AND WILL BE CALLED THE SON OF THE MOST HIGH; AND THE LORD GOD WILL GIVE HIM THE THRONE OF HIS FATHER DAVID; 33 AND HE WILL REIGN OVER THE HOUSE OF JACOB FOREVER, AND HIS KINGDOM WILL HAVE NO END."

TO JOSEPH: MATTHEW 1:20-21 - AN ANGEL OF THE LORD APPEARED TO HIM IN A DREAM, SAYING, "JOSEPH, SON OF DAVID, DO NOT BE AFRAID TO TAKE MARY AS YOUR WIFE; FOR THE CHILD WHO HAS BEEN CONCEIVED IN HER IS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. 21 "SHE WILL BEAR A SON; AND YOU SHALL CALL HIS NAME JESUS, FOR HE WILL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS."

REMEMBER THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE BIRTH OF JESUS?

HIS BIRTH WAS A CRITICAL MOMENT IN THE REDEMPTIVE STORY. IF JESUS ISN'T BORN, HE DOESN'T DIE AND IF HE DOESN'T DIE HE CERTAINLY ISN'T RAISED AND EXALTED - BOTH THE LINCHPINS OF SALVATION. AND SO IF THE FORCES OF EVIL COULD STOP JESUS BEFORE HE IS EVEN BORN, WHAT A BRILLIANT WAY TO THWART GOD'S PLAN? IF THIS BABY IS BORN, THE DEVIL IS DONE - BUT IF YOU CAN KILL THIS CHILD, YOU KILL THESE PROMISES.

SO NOW WE MUST THINK BACK ON THE HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL MOMENT SURROUNDING CHRIST'S BIRTH. YES THERE WERE SHEPHERDS AND STARS AND NO ROOM IN THE INN. BUT THERE WAS ALSO A DERANGED KING WHO DECIDED TO KILL ALL OF THE BABY BOYS OF THE REGION BORN AROUND THE TIME OF THE MESSIAH'S BIRTH (AS TOLD HIM BY THE MAGI) - HEROD THE (SO CALLED) GREAT. MATTHEW TELLS US:

MATTHEW 2:16 (NLT) - HEROD WAS FURIOUS WHEN HE REALIZED THAT THE WISE MEN HAD OUTWITTED HIM. HE SENT SOLDIERS TO KILL ALL THE BOYS IN AND AROUND BETHLEHEM WHO WERE TWO YEARS OLD AND UNDER, BASED ON THE WISE MEN'S REPORT OF THE STAR'S FIRST APPEARANCE.

THE DEVIL TRIED TO KILL JESUS BEFORE/AT/AFTER HIS BIRTH. THE GOSPEL WRITERS TELL US THE HISTORICAL EVENTS THAT UNFOLDED AND REVELATION IS OPENING A WINDOW TO THE SPIRITUAL EVENTS THAT WERE AT PLAY. MORE ON THIS LATER.

REVELATION 12:7-12 - THE DRAGON'S DOWNFALL

WHAT DOES JOHN SEE NEXT?

- A WAR IN HEAVEN BETWEEN MICHAEL (WHO SCRIPTURE PORTRAYS AS ONE OF GOD'S CHIEF ANGELS) AND HIS ANGELS AGAINST THE DRAGONS AND HIS ANGELS.
- MICHAEL'S FORCES WIN AND THE DRAGON (NOW IDENTIFIED AS THE DEVIL IN 12:9) IS EXPELLED FROM HEAVEN TO THE EARTH.
- A LOUD VOICE REJOICES IN THIS VICTORY AND EXTOLL THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST OVER THE DEVIL
- THE DEVIL IS DEFEATED BUT NOT DESTROYED AND NOW IS ANGRY, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE HIS DEMISE IS SOON.

REVELATION 12:13-17 - THERE'S MORE

WHAT DOES JOHN SEE NEXT?

- THE DRAGON CAN'T BEAT MICHAEL, SO HE TURNS HIS ATTENTION TOWARDS THE WOMAN.
- THE WOMAN IS SUPERNATURALLY RESCUED AGAIN, THIS TIME SHE IS RAISED UP BY EAGLE'S WINGS TO BE SAVED.
- THE DEVIL CONTINUES A SPECIFIC ATTACK TOWARDS THE WOMAN (A RIVER'S FLOOD FROM HIS MOUTH), BUT THE EARTH "HELPED" THE WOMAN BY OPENING UP TO "DRINK" THE WATER BEFORE IT REACHED HER.
- THE DRAGON IS LEFT ENRAGED, NOW DETERMINED TO "MAKE WAR" AGAINST THE "REST OF HER CHILDREN", NOW IDENTIFIED AS THOSE WHO 'KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD AND HOLD THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS" (12:17)

WHEW! SO MUCH EXCITING, WONDERFUL, CONFUSING, DEEP AND SOBERING THINGS TO CONSIDER. DOES THIS SPEAK OF A COMING SPIRITUAL WAR THAT GOD'S PEOPLE WILL BE SPARED FROM? DOES THIS TEACH ABOUT A SUPERNATURAL RESCUE OF ISRAEL IN THE FINAL DAYS OF THIS EVIL AGE? DID THE WAR IN HEAVEN ALREADY HAPPEN? IS IT HAPPENING OR YET TO HAPPEN IN THE FUTURE? WE SHOULD DIG DEEPER INTO THE TEXT AND IN PRAYER TO UNDERSTAND MORE OF WHAT WE ARE READING. HOWEVER, MOST OF US LOOKING AT THIS TEXT ARE EXAMINING THESE THINGS FOR THE FIRST TIME AND THERE'S A LOT TO UNPACK. SO AS WAS MENTIONED IN THE INTRO OF TODAY'S LESSON, EVERY BIBLE READER MUST FIRST GET THE FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS COMMUNICATED IN ORDER TO BUILD UPON A SOLID

UNDERSTANDING FOR THE HEAVIER TRUTHS THAT WE WILL PUT TOGETHER. SO HERE ARE SOME THINGS WE CAN PROBABLY BE PRETTY SURE OF IN THIS SECTION:

1 - THE CHILD IS JESUS (REVELATION 12:5)

2 - THE WOMAN/MOTHER IS REPRESENTATIVE OF ISRAEL AND SPECIFICALLY MARY, JESUS' MOTHER

3 - THE DRAGON IS THE DEVIL (AKA THE SERPENT OF OLD, SATAN, AND THE ONE WHO DECEIVES THE WHOLE WORLD) (REVELATION 12:9)

4 - THE DRAGON/DEVIL BATTLES WITH THE ANGEL MICHAEL AND HIS ANGELIC FORCES AND IS DEFEATED AND EXPELLED FROM HEAVEN.

5 - THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THIS VICTORY AS WELL AS THE BIRTH AND RESCUE OF THE CHILD IS PART OF THE OVERALL VICTORY THAT GOD IS BRINGING IN THE COURSE OF HISTORY. (REVELATION 12:10)

6 - THE DEVIL, THOUGH FEROCIOUS LIKE A DRAGON, IS DEFEATED AND EXPOSED AS OVERCOME-ABLE (REVELATION 12:9-11)

7 - GOD'S PLANS ARE UNTHWARTED AND GOD'S PEOPLE ARE EMPOWERED AGAINST THE DEVIL'S RAGE (THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB, THE WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY, THE KEEPING OF GOD'S COMMANDMENTS, HOLDING TO THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS, ETC)

8 - WHAT REMAINS OF THIS COSMIC STORY IS AN ONGOING SPIRITUAL BATTLE THAT IS BETWEEN THIS FALLEN AND DEFEATED ADVERSARY AND THE "CHILDREN" OF THIS WOMAN WHO ARE DESCRIBED AS THOSE WHO "KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD AND HOLD TO THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS". (REVELATION 12:17). THE DEVIL IS NOT JUST MAD AT GOD, HE'S MAD AT GOD'S PEOPLE.

9 - THE DEFEATED DEVIL IS ANGRY ABOUT HIS SITUATION (12:12 - "*HAVING GREAT WRATH*", 12:17 - "*ENRAGED*") AND IS DETERMINED TO CREATE PROBLEMS AND CAUSE DAMAGE (12:17 - "*MAKE WAR*") - YET WITH A POINT OF HOPE AND ALSO INDICATIVE OF HIS DESPERATION, HE KNOWS THAT "*HE ONLY HAS A SHORT TIME (12:12).*"

THAT'S NOT A BAD LIST OF THINGS TO UNDERSTAND AND BELIEVE FROM REVELATION 12.

THE FIRST CENTURY CHURCH IS REMINDED OF THE VICTORY GOD BROUGHT AT THE BIRTH OF JESUS OVER THE POWERS OF THIS WORLD (HEROD SPECIFICALLY). THEY ARE IN THEIR OWN SPIRITUAL AND POLITICAL FIGHT AND HAVE ALREADY BEEN SPOKEN TO BY CHRIST ABOUT THE REWARD GIVEN TO "THOSE WHO OVERCOME" (REVELATION 2-3). THEY ARE BEING REMINDED THAT THE DEVIL AND HIS FORCES WANTED TO KILL JESUS AS A BABY BUT WERE MIRACULOUSLY THWARTED - BECAUSE GOD IS IN CONTROL AND BECAUSE GOD IS POWERFUL AND BECAUSE GOD'S WORD, PROMISE AND PLAN IS UNBREAKABLE.

THEY ARE ALSO BEING TOLD THAT PART OF WHY THEY ARE EXPERIENCING THE TRIALS AND SUFFERING THEY ARE SEEING IS DUE TO THE FACT THAT THE DEVIL DIDN'T KILL BABY JESUS AND THAT ENRAGED HIM, AND HE COULDN'T DEFEAT MICHAEL, AND THAT ENRAGED HIM

AND THAT HE COULDN'T STOP GOD'S PLAN FROM ADVANCING AND THAT ENRAGED HIM AND HE HAS NOW DECLARED WAR. THAT'S THE REAL REASON WHY THEY ARE DEALING WITH WHAT THEY ARE DEALING WITH. AND THE LORD GIVES US AN ENTIRE CHAPTER TO PULL BACK THE CURTAIN ON ULTIMATE REALITY SO THEY, AND NOW WE, CAN HAVE THE ACCURATE PERSPECTIVE.

HERE ARE THINGS THAT HAVE TRIGGERED THE DEVIL'S ANGER:

- 1 - THE BIRTH OF JESUS
- 2 - THE MINISTRY OF JESUS
- 3 - THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS
- 4 - HIS DEFEAT BY MICHAEL & CO.
- 5 - HIS BANISHMENT FROM HEAVEN
- 6 - HIS INABILITY TO STOP GOD'S PLAN
- 7 - HIS SOON APPROACHING FINAL EXPIRATION DATE
- 8 - YOUR FAITHFULNESS TO OBEY AND BELIEVE CHRIST.

AND SO THE DEVIL IS ANGRY AND WARRING - BUT THIS BATTLE IS SPIRITUAL, NOT PERSONAL OR POLITICAL OR ECONOMIC OR RELIGIOUS - IT'S SPIRITUAL. DOESN'T THE PRESENCE OF DRAGONS AND A WOMAN WITH 12 STARS AS A CROWN AND ARCHANGELS AND THE REST HAMMER THAT POINT HOME?! AND SPIRITUAL BATTLES REQUIRE SPIRITUAL SOLDIERS WITH SPIRITUAL TACTICS AND WEAPONS.

AND WHAT ARE THOSE WEAPONS?

THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB - GOD'S PLAN WAS THAT JESUS CHRIST'S DEATH WOULD PAY FOR OUR SIN INDUCED DEBT AND FORGIVE US. GOD "PASSED OVER" OUR LIVES BECAUSE OF THE BLOOD OF JESUS. THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB IS SOMETHING GOD HAS DONE FOR US, NOT SOMETHING WE HAVE EARNED OR DONE. THIS COVERING IS HOW WE OVERCOME.

THE WORD OF OUR TESTIMONY - GENERALLY SPEAKING THE GOSPEL, BUT ALSO OUR PERSONAL WITNESS TO GOD'S LOVE AND WORK IN OUR LIVES. WHEN THE DEVIL ATTACKS - USING DECEIT AND ACCUSATION AS WEAPONS, YOU REMEMBER AND DECLARE THE TRUTH OF WHAT YOU HAVE SEEN AND HEARD (TESTIFYING AS A WITNESS). FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE TRUMPS DECEPTIVE ACCUSATION EVERY TIME.

NOT LOVING YOUR LIFE, EVEN WHEN FACED WITH DEATH - THE CHURCH MUST REMEMBER THAT DEATH IS DEFEATED AND WE HAVE THE SURE HOPE OF RESURRECTION AND THE COMING KINGDOM OF GOD. WE MUST LET "*GOODS AND KINDREDS GO, THIS MORTAL LIFE ALSO... THE BODY THEY MAY KILL - BUT GOD'S TRUTH ABIDETH STILL - HIS KINGDOM IS FOREVER*" ("A MIGHTY FORTRESS IS OUR GOD", MARTIN LUTHER). THE DEVIL WILL TRY TO TEMPT WITH PLEASURES AND TEMPORAL THINGS. THOSE THINGS ARE POWERLESS, EVEN WHEN WE ARE THREATENED BECAUSE WE HAVE AN ETERNAL REWARD.

KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD - DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE HOW MUCH SIMPLY OBEYING THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS DEFEATS THE DEVIL IN YOUR LIFE. OFTEN THE DEVIL HAS ACCESS TO YOUR LIFE BECAUSE YOU ARE NOT OBEDIENT TO JESUS. OFTEN THE ATTACKS OF THE EVIL ARE THWARTED BECAUSE YOU ARE COMMITTED TO DOING AND RESPONDING AS JESUS TEACHES US TO.

HOLDING TO THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS - IF THE DEVIL IS ACCUSING YOU, WE COUNTER IT WITH THE TRUTH ABOUT WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US THROUGH CHRIST. IF THE DEVIL ACCUSES YOU OF NOT BEING WORTHY, THE GOSPEL ANSWERS THAT (WE'RE NOT! BUT GOD HAS MADE US WORTHY!). IF THE DEVIL ATTACKS YOU AS A SINNER, THE GOSPEL ANSWERS THAT (WE ARE SINNERS, NOW SAVED BY GOD'S GRACE!). IF THE DEVIL ATTACKS YOU AS WEAK, THE GOSPEL ANSWERS THAT (IN CHRIST, WHEN WE ARE WEAK, HE MAKES US STRONG!). ETC ETC ETC. THE GOSPEL IS NOT GOOD ADVICE, IT'S GOOD NEWS - AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED, WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW AND WHAT WILL HAPPEN. BACK THE DEVIL DOWN WITH THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF HIS DEFEAT, HIS DEMISE AND HIS DESTRUCTION!

YOU AND I CAN'T OVERCOME ON OUR OWN, NOR CAN WE BE IGNORANT ABOUT THE SPIRITUAL BATTLE WE ARE IN. IF YOU ARE TROUBLED BY THE WILDNESS OF THIS CHAPTER, GOOD. IT SHOULD WAKE US UP TO WHAT IS REALLY TRUE. THERE IS AN ENEMY, THERE IS A WAR, THERE IS A FIGHT. AND OUR ENEMY WANTS NOTHING MORE THAN YOU AND I TO BE ASLEEP, PREOCCUPIED OR IGNORANT TO THIS. THE BATTLE IS NOT OURS, BUT THERE IS A BATTLE. GOD AND HIS PEOPLE WILL BE VICTORIOUS, BUT TODAY IS NOT A DAY TO LAY DOWN IN THE FIGHT.

WE WILL CLOSE THIS SECTION WITH THE CALL AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF THIS APPROPRIATE HYMN WRITTEN BY GEORGE DUFFIELD, JR. IN 1858:

*STAND UP, STAND UP FOR JESUS, STAND IN HIS STRENGTH ALONE;
THE ARM OF FLESH WILL FAIL YOU, YE DARE NOT TRUST YOUR OWN.
PUT ON THE GOSPEL ARMOR, EACH PIECE PUT ON WITH PRAYER;
WHERE DUTY CALLS OR DANGER, BE NEVER WANTING THERE.*

*STAND UP, STAND UP FOR JESUS, THE STRIFE WILL NOT BE LONG;
THIS DAY THE NOISE OF BATTLE, THE NEXT THE VICTOR'S SONG.
TO THOSE WHO VANQUISH EVIL, A CROWN OF LIFE SHALL BE;
THEY WITH THE KING OF GLORY, SHALL REIGN ETERNALLY.*

("STAND UP FOR JESUS", GEORGE DUFFIELD JR. IN 1858)