Revelation 12:6–17

A Ministry in the Word

Scripture Reading

> *And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.*

The Order of the Narrative — Why Verses 7–12 Come Where They Do

Verse 6 states that the woman fled into the wilderness, where God had prepared a place for her for 1,260 days. Verses 7 through 12 then step back to show the conditions that led to her fleeing — the war in heaven, the casting out of Satan, and what that means. These verses are not chronologically after the woman's flight; they are explanatory. They set out the reasons behind what verse 6 records. The casting out of Satan from heaven is the great event that precipitates the persecution that drives the woman into the wilderness. Then verse 13 picks up again with the dragon seeing that he has been cast out and turning to persecute

the woman.

The woman's flight is not abandonment. God had prepared a place for her. She is not forgotten in the wilderness — she is fed there. Elijah in the wilderness is a partial type of this: driven out by Jezebel's persecution, preserved at the brook Cherith by ravens that God sent, sustained even in the most unlikely circumstances. What agencies God will use for the preservation of the woman we may not be able to specify in every case — but that He will preserve her is certain. And in the Song of Solomon we see the end of the story: *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?* She enters the wilderness fleeing and comes up out of it leaning on Him — that is the great transformation the wilderness will work.

The War in Heaven — Satan Cast Out

Michael and his angels fight against the dragon and his angels, and the dragon prevails not. Their place is found no more in heaven. This is the final closure of heaven to Satan. He had previously had access — we see it in Job, where the sons of God present themselves before Jehovah and Satan comes among them. He had access to accuse. Michael knew him from of old — they had contended before over the body of Moses — but then was not yet the time for this expulsion. Now the time has arrived. Michael, who in Daniel 12:1 stands up for the children of Daniel's people at the time of unprecedented distress, here effects the removal of the great adversary from heaven altogether. It is all preparatory to the impending kingdom of God.

Satan is identified in verse 9 with a six-fold description: the great dragon, that ancient serpent, the devil, Satan, the one who deceives the whole world, and the one cast out into the earth. Six — not seven — because even the fullest description of the enemy falls one short of the completeness that belongs only to God. The devil means slanderer; Satan means adversary. The ancient serpent

goes back to the garden of Eden. These are not different beings but different aspects of the character and activity of the one great enemy of God and man.

The Accuser Cast Down — and What It Means for the Judgment Seat

The voice in heaven announces the expulsion of the accuser of the brethren — *which accused them before our God day and night.* Satan's access to the presence of God was not merely permission to tempt and test as in the case of Job; he was actively engaged in constant accusation. Day and night he brought his accusations before God against God's people.

There is a bearing here on the judgment seat of Christ, which takes place in heaven during the first half of the week after the rapture of the saints. That is the time when every believer stands before God to have all things settled eternally — God's mind expressed about everything, the soul adjusted to be at one with God's heart. While that is in process, the accuser who has harped night and day on every flaw and failure is still in heaven, still accusing. But when the judgment seat is concluded, Satan is cast out. He will have no venue. No access. No way to raise an objection or reopen a case that God has settled in the blood of His Son. That is one aspect of the significance of his expulsion.

They Overcame Him — by the Blood, the Word, and Disregard of Life

The voice in heaven declares how the brethren — the godly Jewish remnant who are the object of Satan's special fury — overcame him: by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony, and by not loving their lives unto death. These are not Christians in the present sense, but the efficacy of the blood of the Lamb is not limited to those who know it in the full light of the gospel. Those sheltered under the blood in Exodus 12 were sheltered from divine judgment even though

their understanding of its significance was far from complete. There is a difference between resting in the full known peace of a conscience cleansed by finished work, as the Christian has, and being sheltered by the blood while not yet in the conscious enjoyment of that rest — as will be the case with the remnant.

What they overcame him with was not argument, not rhetoric, not accumulated evidence — but blood, testimony, and the willingness to die. The Lord Jesus in the wilderness overcame Satan with a single formula: *It is written.* These too answer with what God has stated. And loving not their lives unto the death is the final disarming of all that the enemy can threaten. The Lord said that he who loves his life will lose it. When a soul reaches the place where the threat of death no longer controls it, there is nothing left for Satan to leverage against it.

Rejoice, Ye Heavens — Woe to the Earth

The casting out of Satan brings a division that runs through all that follows. Heaven rejoices — those who dwell there, the caught-up saints, are exhorted to rejoice. Woe to the earth and the sea — the devil has come down having great wrath, knowing his time is short. The contrast between the patience of the one who sits at God's right hand waiting until His enemies are made His footstool, and the impatience of the devil knowing his time is short, could not be sharper. One comes down like showers of blessing; the other comes down in great wrath. One knows He has a thousand years; the other knows he has but three and a half.

The beast blasphemes those that dwell in heaven — which shows that he knows they are there. One does not blaspheme what one does not believe exists. The awfulness of a heart that knows the truth and still hardens itself against it is expressed in that detail. And it connects with all the evidence throughout Scripture that the impenitent heart, even in the full light of God's judgment, does not repent. After all that the Lord did when He was here, He did not trust Himself

to men, knowing what was in man. After all that will be displayed in the tribulation, it says of those under the plagues: they repented not.

— Study ends —