

The Book of Revelation

Satan, A Defeated Enemy

Lesson #8 for February 23, 2019

Scriptures: Revelation 12; 13:13-14; 19:20; Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 14:12-15; Daniel 7:23-25; 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12.

1. We have now come to the critical center of the book of Revelation. As we have already stated, the book of Revelation is organized as a *chiasm* with the most important material being in the center. The epicenter of Revelation is the fall of Satan in Revelation 12:7-12.
2. Revelation 12, written after all of the disciples and apostles except John were dead, gives us the background story of the great controversy. Seventh-day Adventists need to understand Revelation 12-14 backwards and forwards. These three chapters shed light on what we have already studied in the first half of Revelation; but, especially, they are important in preparing us for the second half of the book in Revelation 15:1-22:21. In the first half of the book, we have looked at the struggles that the Christian church has faced until modern times. In Revelation 15-20, we will look at the final events in this world's history.
3. In Revelation 12, Lucifer—now Satan or the Devil—has come out clearly as the archenemy of God and His people. Contrary to what many scholars and even many ordinary Christians believe, Satan is very real. He is the mastermind behind all rebellion in the universe. He knows that his time is short, and he is organizing his troops—not only his evil angels but also his followers on this earth—for an all-out final battle called the battle of Armageddon.
4. Read Revelation 12:1-5. *Women* are used in the Bible as representatives of God's professed people, whether faithful or not. A *pure and chaste woman* stands for faithful believers while a *prostitute* or *harlot* stands for apostate Christians. See 2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 12:13-17; 17:3-6. This woman is first pictured as God's faithful people from the days of Adam down to the time to Christ and then as giving birth to Jesus Himself.

This woman is portrayed as clothed with the sun and with the moon under her feet. **The sun represents the glory of Christ's character, His righteousness** (*Mal. 4:2*). He is "the light of the world" (*John 8:12*), and His people are to reflect the light of God's loving character to the world (*Matt. 5:14-16*). **The moon, as "the lesser light" (*Gen. 1:16*), points to the Old Testament promises** foreshadowing the work of Christ in the gospel era.

The next thing John sees in the vision is a "fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns" (*Rev. 12:3, NKJV*). This dragon is later identified as Satan (*Rev. 12:9*). **His "tail," symbolizing the means used to deceive** (*Isa. 9:14, 15; Rev. 9:10*), dragged a third of the stars from heaven down to the earth (*Rev. 12:4*). This action shows that, having fallen from his exalted position in heaven (*Isa. 14:12-15*), Satan was able to deceive a third of the angels. These fallen angels are the demons who assist the devil in opposing God and His work of salvation (*see 1 Tim. 4:1*). Revelation also uses the dragon, described as "having seven heads and ten horns," as a symbol of those agents in the world used by Satan—pagan Rome (*Rev. 12:4*) and spiritualism (*Rev. 16:13*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday. [Bold type is added; italic type is in the source.]

5. Down through the centuries, Satan has had various organizations and groups working on his behalf on this earth. When a religion is supported by military and civil power, the Bible

speaks of it as a *beast*.

The dragon is said to be Satan (Revelation 12:9); he it was that moved upon Herod to put the Saviour to death. **But the chief agent of Satan in making war upon Christ and His people during the first centuries of the Christian Era was the Roman Empire, in which paganism was the prevailing religion. Thus while the dragon, primarily, represents Satan, it is, in a secondary sense, a symbol of pagan Rome.**—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 438.2. [Bold type is added.]

6. Read Revelation 12:4. We have already suggested that the number *one-third*, as used in Revelation, primarily represents the activity of Satan and his followers. In this verse we see that his tail represents his ability to deceive. He even deceived one third of the angels in heaven who were standing around the throne of God!
7. Read Revelation 12:9. Satan is called *the ancient serpent* which should immediately remind us of the story recorded in Genesis 3. Eve and then Adam ate of the fruit of that tree and, thus, surrendered their dominion over this earth to Satan.
8. God and His angels told Adam and Eve that a Messiah was coming. (See Genesis 3:15.) From the beginning, Satan waited for that Messiah to be born so he could destroy Him in any way possible. But, despite all of Satan's efforts, attacking Jesus from every side, he failed; and the Child was caught up to God and His throne. (Revelation 12:5)
9. Read Revelation 12:7-9. What weapons were used? For the first time we read in the Bible about the war which began in heaven. **Why do you think this information was not told to any of the prophets in the Old Testament? Or, to any of the disciples in the New Testament? Or, even to Paul?** But, only to John after all the others were dead? It is such an important part of our understanding of what lies behind nearly all the stories in the Bible.
10. Read Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:12-15. The incredible arrogance and self-deceit that led Lucifer, now Satan, in his rebellion against God is hard to believe! In his assumed role as a leader of this earth, he even returned to heaven and accused Job. (Job 1:6-12) Compare John 12:31. But, Satan was soundly defeated by the life and death of Jesus; and thus, his activities were confined to this earth because none of the beings in the rest of the universe would listen to him any more. His home now is called *the abyss*!

Read **Luke 4:6**: "I will give you all this power and all this wealth," the Devil told him. "It has all been handed over to me, and I can give it to anyone I choose."—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Luke 4:6). New York: American Bible Society.

11. Try to imagine Lucifer making this kind of a claim to Jesus in the wilderness of temptation!
12. By His life and His death, Jesus redeemed what had been lost; the truth about Satan's character was demonstrated before the universe. Jesus proved that sin leads to death and that Satan is a liar and a deceiver. See John 8:44.

Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 761.2.

13. Although the great controversy is not over yet, the universe knows that the rule over this earth has been transferred back from Satan to Jesus; He is proclaimed the legitimate Ruler

over the earth. (Ephesians 1:20-22; **Philippians 2:9-11**; Revelation 5:13) In Philippians as well as in Romans 14:11 and Revelation 5:13, we learn that, one day, everyone in the universe will bow down—and that includes Satan himself—and openly proclaim that “Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:11, *Good News Bible**)

14. But, as we read in Revelation 12, Satan knows all of this; and he is furious. He knows that he has only a short time left. He is determined to cause as much pain, suffering, and havoc as possible as he does everything he possibly can to deceive and destroy as many as possible. (Matthew 24:24) Misery loves company!
15. So, we, as professed Christians trying to follow the truth, need to recognize that we are not just fighting against human evils and problems; but also, we are fighting against spiritual powers, against the forces of Satan on every side.
16. Read Revelation 12:13-14. What is represented by these verses? What part of the church was preserved safe from the dragon’s attack during those 1260 years?

The casting down of Satan as an accuser of the brethren in Heaven was accomplished by the great work of Christ in giving up his life. Notwithstanding Satan’s persistent opposition, the plan of redemption was being carried out.... Satan, knowing that the empire he had usurped would in the end be wrested from him, determined to spare no pains to destroy as many as possible of the creatures whom God had created in his image. He hated man because Christ had manifested for him such forgiving love and pity, and he now prepared to practice upon him every species of deception by which he might be lost; he pursued his course with more energy because of his own hopeless condition.—Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*,* vol. 3, 194.2-195.0; *SDABC** vol. 7, 973.10; *6Red** 13.1.

17. Satan thought he had almost won the great controversy on this earth just before Jesus was born. And, once again, after Jesus was crucified and dead, Satan thought he was close to winning. Then, Pentecost happened, and the all-out war started again. In both Daniel and in Revelation, we read about a period of three and one-half years (42 months or 1260 days/years), a time during which Satan would dominate the Christian church and most of Western civilization. We now know that period extended from A.D. 538-1798 when Napoleon’s general Berthier arrested the pope and put him in prison where he died shortly thereafter. See Daniel 7:23-25 and Revelation 12:14.
18. We know that Satan succeeded in bringing many corruptions into the so-called Christian church. Then, he was able to use his corrupt church to turn around and persecute those who remained faithful. Satan perverted nominal Christianity until it persecuted other Christians.
19. Read Revelation 17:15 and Revelation 12:16. By comparing these two verses, we can discover that *water* is used repeatedly to represent groups of people, even nations. Armies were sent out repeatedly by Rome to try to arrest and destroy anyone who resisted its power and influence. But, for hundreds of years, groups like the Waldensees and the Vaudois, using secretive methods, preached the truth and spread it around Europe. Then came the Protestant Reformation; about one hundred years later, the doors opened for people to escape to America and practice their religion with freedom away from the persecutions of the apostate church.

Think of how long the persecution here lasted: 1,260 years. What should this great duration tell us about how limited we are in understanding why things, such as the return of Christ, seem to be taking so long, at least from our

perspective?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, February 19.

20. Read Revelation 12:17. What are the implications of this verse? Who are the *rest* or *remnant* of that faithful woman? And what does it mean *to keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus*? The faithful listen to God and delight to follow Him.
21. A remnant implies a small group left over after most of the people are dead and gone. So, what are the two important characteristics of this final group of people? The first four commandments of God focus on worshiping the true God. Contrary to what many think today, the final issue in the great controversy will be over worship. It will not be a question of whether we worship or do not worship; it will be over *who* we worship: God or the Devil? Everyone will be loyal to one or the other. *Selfishness* is the Devil's motto.
22. Read Revelation 19:10 and 22:9. These verses help us to understand what *the testimony of Jesus* involves. There will be a group living at the end of this earth's history who will have among them prophets who speak the truth as inspired by God.
23. Are we taking advantage of this fact? We are by far the most privileged group of people that has ever lived on this earth. No previous generation has had access to all of the light that we have. What are we doing with all that light?
24. Revelation 12 reveals a panorama of Satan's methods used to try to win in the great controversy. Satan has used lies and deceit. He has corrupted the church by subtle compromises, and he has threatened with coercion and persecution when possible. He has killed or tried to kill those who tried to reform the church. But, as the end of time approaches, he is waging an all-out war against God's faithful people. This war will include a large element of deception; but, evil angels working miracles and producing spiritualistic manifestations will be introduced. (Revelation 16:14) It will be very deceptive; if possible, he will deceive the very elect. (Matthew 24:24) Read Revelation 12:9 and Revelation 20:7-10. From beginning to end, Satan's strategies have been based on deceit. Think of what modern movies are doing? Can people really fly?
25. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12; Revelation 13:13-14; and Revelation 19:20. As noted in Revelation 12 through Revelation 20, Satan does everything possible to deceive anyone who will listen to him. (For example, see Revelation 12:9; 13:14; 18:23; 19:20; 20:8.)

He uses, in turn, political and religious powers to do his work: pagan Rome, symbolized by the dragon (*Rev. 12:4, 5*); followed by a power symbolized by the sea beast (*Rev. 12:6, 15; Rev. 13:1-8*); and, finally, a power symbolized by the earth beast (*Rev. 13:11*). **Throughout the rest of the book, the members of this satanic triad—paganism/spiritualism as symbolized by the dragon; Roman Catholicism, symbolized by the sea beast; and apostate Protestantism, symbolized by the lamblike, or earth beast—are inseparably united in opposing God's activities in the world.** They work together to deceive people, in order to turn them away from God and to get them to side with Satan in the "battle of that great day of God Almighty" (*Rev. 16:13, 14, NKJV*). These false religious systems will be destroyed together at the Second Coming (*Rev. 19:20*), while the dragon, symbolizing the devil, who worked through these earthly powers (*Rev. 12:9*), will be destroyed at the end of the thousand years (*Rev. 20:10*). **Revelation shows that the end-time deception will be so great that most people will be led to choose the way of destruction (*Matt. 7:13*).**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for

Thursday, February 21. [Bold type is added; italic type is in the source.]

26. Unfortunately, by using all of these methods in an all-out attack, Satan will succeed with most people; most people will be led to choose the easy way, leading to destruction. (See Matthew 7:13; see also Revelation 16:13-14.)
27. This calls for incredible discernment and wisdom on the part of God's faithful people. See Revelation 13:18 and 17:9. Compare James 1:5. In Revelation 12 we have a very serious warning. If Satan's activities have been very successful in the past, they will be even more persuasive in the future. Are we awake and prepared for what is coming? We know that, ultimately, God has already won the great controversy! But, the battles on this earth are not over yet. Every evil angel is doing his best to deceive and lead astray anyone he can.
28. While some Christians talk too much about Satan's power, many so-called Christians doubt that Satan even exists! Why is that? If one does not believe Satan exists, then, when he and his cronies perform miracles, s/he will have no choice but to attribute those miracles to God; that is exactly what Satan wants.
29. So, what should we have learned from our study of Revelation 12? How does it affect our relationship with God and to the Devil when we realize that the great controversy started right next to the throne of God, not on this earth? How does our understanding of the great controversy impact our understanding of the character of God? The universe is watching!
30. If Satan really believed that God was the kind of Person that he claims God is—arbitrary, exacting, vengeful, unforgiving, and severe—would he have dared to rebel in the first place? If God were really like that, wouldn't He have zapped Satan at the first sign of rebellion?
31. Revelation 12 sets the stage for the portrayal of Satan's all out final efforts to deceive as pictured in Revelation 13.
32. It is interesting to note that as each new character is portrayed in the book of Revelation, God—through John—gives us a brief description of that individual or character and a little bit of their previous history.

In chapter 1, Jesus appears as a character in the vision for the first time (*Rev. 1:12-18* [He is named earlier: *Rev. 1:5, 9*]). There is a visual description (*Rev. 1:12-16*) and a bit of His previous history (*Rev. 1:17, 18*), followed by His actions in the subsequent vision (*Revelation 2 and 3*). In chapter 11, the two witnesses are introduced similarly (*Rev. 11:3-6*), followed by their actions in the context of the vision (*Rev. 11:7-13*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 107. [Italic type and content in brackets are in the source.]

33. So, what can we learn about the introduction of the new characters in Revelation 12:1-4? What does it mean to say that the woman is dressed with the sun and the moon under her feet? And a crown of 12 stars on her head? And what can we possibly make of the huge red dragon with seven heads and ten horns?
34. It should be apparent by now—and it would be even more apparent if we could read this passage in the original Greek—that it is all about war! But, what kind of war? There were no cannons or airplanes or huge ships involved in the war in heaven. **The war in heaven was a war of words and ideas. What evidence do we have for that?**

First, the dragon sweeps a third of the stars down from heaven with his tail (Greek: *oura*). The tail is an Old Testament symbol for a prophet who teaches lies (*Isa. 9:15*). Second, the dragon is defined in Revelation 12:9 as “that ancient serpent” (*NIV*), a clear reference to the lies about God spoken to

Adam and Eve in the garden (*Gen. 3:1-6*). Third, the dragon/Satan is cast out of heaven as the “accuser of our brothers” (*ESV*) in Revelation 12:10. It is his accusing words, rather than physical weapons, that result in his being cast out. And finally, the dragon/Satan is overcome by “the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony” (*Rev. 12:11, NKJV*). So the war of Revelation 12 is not a military battle; it is a war of words and ideas.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 108. See GC 670.2.

35. Seventh-day Adventists have built their understanding of prophecy on the concept of *one day* for one year equivalency in prophetic pronouncements. Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:5 support this idea.
36. Virtually all scholars who take the writings of Daniel even semi-seriously recognize that the *70 weeks* or *490 days* of Daniel 9 must mean 490 years. To do that, they must apply the year-for-a-day principle. But, most of them do not want to admit that the other prophecies of Daniel need to be interpreted using the same principle.

But when should one apply prophetic days as years? There are several guiding principles to consider. (1) Because apocalyptic prophecies, such as are found in Daniel and Revelation, are full of symbols, a symbolic meaning for any numbers in the prophecy should be considered. (2) Year-day numbers tend to be the kind one would not use in normal speech. No parent, for example, would say that his or her child is 1,260 days old, 42 months old, or, even less, say that the child is as old as 2,300 evenings and mornings! (3) In a sequence of prophetic events, if the prophecy makes more sense when counting the days as years, one should do so. For example, in Daniel 7, each of the four beasts rules for multiple decades, even hundreds of years. But when the chief opponent of God appears, it rules for only three and a half “times,” or years (*Dan. 7:25*). From the perspective of the end of history, it becomes evident that this unusual prophetic time period of Daniel 7 should be interpreted using the day-year principle.—*Ibid.** 108.

One of the marks of the remnant in Revelation 12:17 is that they are those who “have” (Greek: *echontôn*) the “testimony of Jesus” (Greek: *tên marturion Iêsou*). This means that John foresaw an end-time revival of the kind of visionary, prophetic gift he himself was given (*Rev. 1:2*). This meaning for “testimony of Jesus” is confirmed by a careful comparison of Revelation 19:10 and Revelation 22:8, 9. Those who hold to the testimony of Jesus in Revelation 19:10 are called “the prophets” in Revelation 22:9. Seventh-day Adventists see this gift fulfilled in the ministry of Ellen G. White.—*Ibid.** 109.

37. It is our understanding of the cosmic conflict and its implications which allow Seventh-day Adventists to answer many of the great questions that are raised in the Bible and even in the world. **We can reconcile many apparently irreconcilable problems if we understand the great controversy over God’s character and government and why God has to act in certain ways because of the presence, questions, and accusations of the Devil.**
38. To a large degree, our picture of God determines how we live and behave. If we think of God as severe and judgmental, we become more like that. If we think of God as gracious and self-sacrificing, we become more like that. We become like the God/god we worship!

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