

# **The Book of Revelation**

## **Session 7 - Endurance Through Persecution (Chapters 12-13:10)**

### **Book Overview**

The Book of Revelation can be divided into five sections:

1. Introduction: Establishing Context and Conflict (Chapter 1-5)
2. Action: The Main Story (Chapter 6-11)
3. Action: The Main Story Retold - Focus on Satan's Schemes (Chapters 12-14)
4. Action: The Main Story Retold - Focus on Mankind's Sinfulness (Chapters 15-19)
5. Ending: Resolution (Chapter 20-22)

Chapters 12-13:10 begin a retelling of the action, this time zooming in on Satan's activity.

### **Chapter Overview**

These two chapters can be divided into two sections:

1. The Enduring Rage of Satan (Chapter 12)
2. Satan's Counterfeit Kingdom (Revelation 13:1-10)

These chapters are the first half of one long vision (Revelation 12-14) that gives us insight into the evil schemes of Satan, which will become fully manifest in the end times. Just as God's heart is to save as many people that are perishing as possible, Satan's heart is to condemn as many people that are being saved as possible. His deep hatred of Jesus, which, led by a wicked ruler (Herod), was manifested in the killing of many innocent children at Jesus' birth, will once again become manifested through violent opposition towards Jews and Christians in the form of the Antichrist, a man who will bring the persecution of God's people to unprecedented levels and lead the whole world astray.

Jesus spoke of persecution many times (Matthew 10:22, 24:9-14, John 15:18) - not to scare his disciples but to keep them from falling away (John 16:1). At the start of the Book of Revelation Jesus writes to the seven churches, repeatedly urging them to keep their eyes on Him so they would be victorious (Revelation 2:7,11,17,26, 3:5,12,21). This vision is given to warn God's people of all that will come so we might remain faithful and endure even amidst intense persecution.

### **The Enduring Rage of Satan (Chapter 12)**

*Verse 1:*

*"A great sign appeared in heaven"* - John identifies this new vision as being a sign, or 'symbol'. This section leans much more on symbolic language than the previous chapters.

*"A woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head"* - This woman is Israel (Genesis 37:9-11). This woman is clothed with splendour and beauty.

*Verse 2:*

*"She was pregnant"* - The nation of Israel was appointed by God to bring forth Jesus (salvation) into the world (Genesis 12:3, Isaiah 49:6, John 4:22, Romans 11:11).

*"Cried out in pain"* - There is a cost to bringing forth this child. Jesus' first coming changed the whole world forever, yet was surrounded by trouble and death (Matthew 2:16-18). His second coming will also change the world forever and be surrounded by trouble and death, which he describes as birth pangs (Matthew 24:8).

*Verse 3:*

*"Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon"* - John identifies this dragon later in v9 as Satan. He is fierce and other-worldly.

*"With seven heads... and seven crowns on its heads"* - The seven heads are seven hills or kings (Revelation 17:9-10). John highlights seven significant kingdoms that Satan has used and will use to carry out his evil purposes and bring forth his own counterfeit kingdom. He is enthroned upon these kingdoms.

*"Ten horns"* - The ten horns are ten kings (Revelation 17:12) who will join Satan in his end-time purposes.

*Verse 4:*

*"Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth"* - The same language is used in Daniel 8:10, and the angel Gabriel explains the stars are God's people (Daniel 8:24-25). This could be talking about people but could be talking about fallen angels.

*"The dragon stood in front of the woman... so that it might devour the child the moment he was born"* - The dragon knows this child will be his downfall. We see this pictured in the death that surrounded Jesus' birth. Jesus is the primary object of Satan's wrath because He is the one who will ultimately defeat Satan (Genesis 3:15, 1 John 3:8, Hebrews 2:14).

*Verse 5:*

*"She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will 'rule all the nations with an iron sceptre'"* - Psalm 2 declares Jesus is the Anointed One destined to rule and reign on the earth (Acts 4:26, Hebrews 1:5, Revelation 19:15). He is the child promised to Israel (Isaiah 9:6) and their true glory (Luke 2:29-32, Isaiah 60:19-22).

*"Her child was snatched up to God and to his throne"* - Jesus was caught up to God when He ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9).

*Verse 6:*

*"The woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God"* - Just as Mary and Joseph fled from Herod, so too will Israel flee and hide from her persecutors.

*"Where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days"* - This is the same period of time the Two Witnesses will testify for (Revelation 11:2-3). John is bringing the story back to this future time

period of Jesus' return. God will supernaturally protect Israel from Satan's rage even while He disciplines them for their sinfulness. It is in this wilderness place of trial and testing that God will draw Israel back to Him (Hosea 2:1-23, Jeremiah 31:1-40).

*Verse 7:*

*"Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back"* - Michael is the protector of Israel (Daniel 12:1) who will arise to fight for Israel. At this time preceding Jesus' return, Satan's rage will be stirred up just as it was at Jesus' birth.

*Verse 8-9:*

*"They lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down - that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray... and his angels with him"* - Paul states clearly in Ephesians 6:12 that our battle is not primarily to do with this earth, but in heavenly places where spiritual beings are at war. John sees Satan and his angels being cast completely out of heaven, which can only be explained as a future reality. They will lose a measure of authority but it will still be a terrifying time for those on the earth.

*Verse 10:*

*"Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah"* - Heaven recognises that God's kingdom is breaking through. Satan has nowhere to go as God's rule is now taking over the earth. Our salvation will be fully revealed when Jesus returns (Philippians 2:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:9, 2 Timothy 2:10, 1 Peter 1:5).

*"The accuser of our brothers and sisters... has been hurled down"* - Heaven rejoices that the one who accuses and condemns us has been hurled down from heaven

*Verse 11:*

*"They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death"* - Our victory is not in avoiding death but in choosing death (Matthew 16:24-26). We are empowered to walk this life of surrender by following Jesus' example and allowing His victory on the cross to empower and strengthen us.

*Verse 12:*

*"Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them!"* - The time of battle in the heavenly places has come to an end.

*"But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you!"* - A time of great battle and trouble is now upon the earth. This is the final birth pang (Matthew 24:8) preceding Jesus' return.

*"He is filled with fury, because he knows his time is short"* - Satan knows his defeat is imminent, but this will make him only more dangerous and vengeful.

*Verse 13:*

*"When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child"* - Satan's hatred of Jesus now extends towards his 'family'. In his

rage he will seek to wipe out the nation of Israel, which he knows is dear to God's heart (Zechariah 2:8, Isaiah 62:4-5).

*Verse 14:*

*"The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness"* - Similar language to Exodus 19:4, where God brought Israel out of captivity in Exodus. God will preserve a remnant (Revelation 7:4-8).

*"Where she would be taken care of for time, times and half a time"* - Time (one year), times (two years) and half a time (six months) - this means three and a half years. This is the same time period as before (42 months and 1,260 days).

*Verse 15-16:*

*"Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river"* - Satan will seek to destroy Israel completely. We don't know exactly what this will look like but God will supernaturally deliver Israel from complete destruction. Satan is the one who leads the world astray (Revelation 12:9) so part of this will look like Satan stirring up hatred across the nations towards Israel.

*Verse 17:*

*"Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring - those who keep God's commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus"* - The dragon's fury will extend to all of Jesus' brothers and sisters. Believers around the world will face incredible levels of persecution and hatred in these days, just as Jesus warned (Matthew 24:9). We will be hated because Satan hates Jesus (John 15:18).

### **Satan's Counterfeit Kingdom (Revelation 13:1-10)**

*Verse 1:*

*"I saw a beast coming out of the sea"* - The beast speaks of another kingdom that will emerge on the earth (Revelation 17:11) in these latter times. The beast also refers to a man, the antichrist (Revelation 13:18).

*"It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns"* - Just like the dragon, but the crowns are on the horns. The dragon rules over kingdoms and the beast rules over kings.

*"On each had a blasphemous name"* - Everything about the beast is a distortion and mockery of who Jesus is (1 John 2:22, 4:3).

*Verse 2:*

*"The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion"* - In Daniel 7, Daniel sees a vision of four beasts coming out of the sea, the first like a lion, the second like a bear, and the third like a leopard. He then sees a fourth beast which he tells us has ten horns (Daniel 7:7, Revelation 13:1), will blaspheme God (Daniel 7:11,25, Revelation 13:1,5), will rule for 42 months (Daniel 7:25, Revelation 13:5), has power to wage war against God's people (Daniel 7:21, Revelation 13:7) and will be destroyed forever when

Jesus enters His kingdom (Daniel 7:11-14,27, Revelation 12:10). John is seeing the same beast now, and Daniel agrees that these visions concern the time of the end (Daniel 8:17,19,23,26, 9:26, 11:40, 12:4). This kingdom will walk in all the wickedness and evil of these previous kingdoms.

*"The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority"* - The dragon, the beast and the false prophet are an unholy trinity that mock The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They operate in similar ways - just as God gave Jesus authority (Matthew 28:18) so will Satan give the antichrist authority.

Verse 3:

*"One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast"* - One of the heads (kingdoms) through which the beast has authority will be a kingdom that people thought had died (or was dying) but will be miraculously reborn (Revelation 13:12,14). This will be a counterfeit to Jesus, who died and was resurrected. The nature of how this kingdom came to power will cause many to follow it.

Verse 4:

*"People worshipped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshipped the beast and asked 'Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?'"* - Just as Jesus brought glory to God (John 17:4), the beast will bring glory to Satan. Heaven proclaims the uniqueness of Jesus (Revelation 5:9) while the earth will proclaim the uniqueness of the beast. The kingdom and power of the beast will seem unsurpassable.

Verse 5:

*"The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months"* - Through clever speech the beast will deceive many in this 42 month time period.

Verse 6:

*"It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven"* - The beast will question and slander God's character, His word and His commandments. He will attack every aspect of who God is.

Verse 7:

*"It was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them"* - He will be the ultimate expression of the conqueror in Revelation 6:2. He has been given power for this specific time in history. God is using even the rage of Satan to serve His purposes.

*"And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation"* - The reach of this kingdom will be global.

Verse 8:

*"All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast - all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life"* - The nations will see the beast as the solution to all the world's

problems (Matthew 24:24). They will be deceived into thinking God and God's people (Jews and Christians) are the problem.

*"The Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world"* - John reminds us that Jesus' power and authority is greater still. He is the first and last (Revelation 1:17) and He will have the final word.

*Verse 9-10:*

*"If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity they will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword they will be killed"* - John references Jeremiah 15:2, where God tells Israel His mind is made up concerning their judgement. This is a warning to believers just as much to non-believers - if we are taken captive by the beast and his words, we will remain in captivity forever. This will be our eternal fate.

*"This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God's people"* - In light of this, our call is to persevere - to remain steady and hold on to the hope we have in Jesus. Our faith will be tested to its limit.

## **Summary**

These chapters describe five aspects of Satan's character we will face in the times to come:

1. He is powerful (Revelation 12:3)
2. He is power-hungry (Revelation 12:4)
3. He is a deceiver (Revelation 12:9)
4. He is an accuser (Revelation 12:10)
5. He is filled with fury (Revelation 12:12)

These chapters highlight four ways Satan will operate in the end-times:

1. Intense persecution of the Jewish people (Revelation 12:13-16)
2. Intense persecution of all who believe in Jesus (Revelation 12:17)
3. Raising up a messiah figure who will lead his kingdom (Revelation 13:1-4)
4. Deceiving the world into worshipping him (Revelation 13:8)

These chapters warn us of three ways we will experience persecution:

1. Through Satan himself (Revelation 12:17)
2. Through the antichrist and his kingdom (Revelation 13:7)
3. Through the nations of the earth who will be deceived (Revelation 13:4)