

Sermon – 09/09/2007 am

Satan Thrown Out of Heaven

Study Text: Revelation 12:7-17

What do you know about angels? Are they feathery white all over, with wings so they can fly? Angels are popular on TV commercials at present. There are angels that love ‘divine cream cheese’. There is also a breakfast cereal portrayed as your ‘guardian angel’. It is interesting that this latter angel is a man rather than a young girl – but he still has those wings!

These depictions have little basis in truth. When angels appear in the Bible they do so in human form, but there is never a word about wings. The Bible tells us that *all angels are ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation* (Hebrews 1:14). Angels are created beings that inhabit the spirit world. They serve the church and believers from there, or can appear visibly. An angel from heaven appeared in Gethsemane to strengthen Jesus (Luke 22:43).

The book of Revelation begins with John sending a letter to each of the seven churches in Asia Minor. They are addressed to the angels of these churches. In his vision John sees and hears many angels. Angels blew each of the seven trumpets. Few angels are named in Scripture; we come to one of these in this passage before us today.

What do we know about the angel called Michael? This is not the first mention of him. He appeared in Daniel’s visions (Daniel 10, 12) and is mentioned in the book of Jude where he contended with the devil about the body of Moses (Jude 9). ‘In Daniel, Michael is closely associated with one like the Son of man, and both are set forth as heavenly representatives of Israel’. Michael, a chief prince or archangel, came to help the Son of man who was contending with the evil prince of the kingdom of Persia (Daniel 10:13).

Rejoicing in Heaven

The vision which began in 12:1 continues with John seeing war break out in heaven. He had previously seen events on earth with the dragon standing before the pregnant woman waiting to devour her child. Even then his tail dragged a third of the stars of heaven, probably symbolising angels, and threw them to the earth (12:4). The dragon failed to destroy the child so went after the woman. The chase is picked up again in 12:13. In 12:7 we are shown another perspective, a heavenly perspective that is behind events on the earth.

What was going on in heaven? War! The dragon is now seen in heaven at war with Michael and his angels. Michael is the guardian angel of Israel, continuing into the church of the NT. The dragon we are told is *that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world* (12:9). He was the serpent who came into the Garden of Eden to accuse God and deceive Eve. He accused God of lying to Adam and Eve. God said to Adam ‘do not eat of the tree that is in the middle of the garden for the day you eat of it you shall surely die’. Satan said ‘you will not surely die’, and Eve fell for the lie.

Satan has existed from the time of creation. Created by God, he exalted himself against God, and was removed from God’s presence. His fate was sealed there in Eden when God declared

the seed of the woman shall bruise your head (Genesis 3:15). Satan became the adversary of God, and all God's people. As we see in the story of Job, on a certain day Satan came before God and made accusations against Job. He said that God was prospering, and in effect bribing Job, to worship him, and that Job was not sincere in his faith.

Jesus was acutely aware of Satan's opposition when he was on the earth. He saw Satan enter Judas as he went to betray him. He even rebuked Peter for being a mouthpiece for Satan. Jesus told his disciples he saw Satan fall like lightning as he anticipated the victory of his own death and resurrection (Luke 10:18). What Jesus saw was this war in heaven and Satan being cast out of heaven.

As in Daniel's vision, Michael the archangel helped the Son of God in overcoming Satan and his angels. Satan was defeated and cast out of heaven (12:9). He was thrown down to the earth along with his angels.

When did this occur and how did Michael and his angels prevail against the great dragon or Satan? The loud voice from heaven explained how they overcame Satan – *by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony* (12:11). The lion of the tribe of Judah prevailed. The lamb that was slain prevailed and became the Lamb on the throne in heaven (5:5, 6).

It was by his blood, by his death and resurrection that Jesus prevailed in the war against Satan. When he returned to heaven Satan had to leave. He was cast out. *Having disarmed the principalities and powers Jesus made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them* (Colossians 2:15).

At Eden Satan prevailed, gaining the power of death. Whenever a man or woman sinned Satan could say to God 'Look! You said they must die'. So death prevailed from Adam to Moses, and until Christ. But through this man's obedience and righteous act came justification of life (Romans 5). Death was defeated in the death of Christ. Satan's power was destroyed in the death of Christ. Now when he accuses the brethren saying 'look at his/her sin, they must die', God says 'look at the Cross, Christ died for them'.

John heard rejoicing in heaven. He heard a song of praise just like in 5:12 – *worthy is the Lamb who was slain*. The heavenly choir sang *Now salvation has come and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ* (12:10).

Who were the ones singing this victory song? They were those who prevailed in Christ *by the word of their testimony*. They were those who *did not love their lives to death* or in other words were ready to die for Christ (12:11). There were many martyrs under the altar in heaven (6:10) and there was a multitude of faithful witnesses who had died in Christ. They were those who clung to Christ, keeping the commandments and the testimony of Jesus Christ (12:17).

Did not Jesus say *in this world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world* (John 16:33).

Woe to the Earth

Where did Satan end up after being cast out of heaven? He was cast to the earth (12:9). *Woe to the earth and the sea!* (12:12). In these last days, in the short time that Satan has left before

being finally cast into the lake of fire (20:10), he is creating havoc on earth. His work is obvious to us.

Corruption and quarrels, fighting and war, men and women driven by hatred and revenge; is this not what we see today? This is the work of Satan. Satan is a liar. Satan is a murderer. All who are without Christ are pawns in the hands of Satan. Jesus said of the Jews, the strict law keeping Jews who were trying to kill him – you are of your father the devil (John 8).

There is no indication that his great wrath does not come until the millennium or that the church will escape this wrath. Satan has come to make war on the earth, against the woman and the rest of her offspring (12:17). If her male child symbolised Christ, then the rest of her children must be brothers of Christ. Jesus was not ashamed to call believers his brothers (Hebrews 2:11). The whole world, including the church, and even more so the church, will suffer under the wrath of Satan.

Satan still tries to accuse believers. He tells them ‘God will not accept you because you have done such wicked things’. He says ‘you must do good works to earn salvation, and that you are not able to do those works’. He gets believers to doubt their salvation, to doubt the reality of heaven and hell, and even to doubt his own reality. He tries to keep us from hearing of the wonderful grace of God in salvation and of the forgiveness of sin that we have in Jesus Christ.

Watched by God

His time is short. Satan is on the prowl seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8). He is powerful but not all powerful. God can and will protect his people. He protected them at the Exodus when he brought them through the water and into the wilderness. Pharaoh threatened to drive Israel into the sea but the sea disappeared and they passed through on dry land. The agents of Satan were destroyed by those same waters.

God led them through *the great and terrible wilderness in which were fiery serpents and scorpions* (Deuteronomy 8:15). In a thirsty land God provided water and also food. God protected them from their enemies and brought them into the land of rest.

Cast down to earth, Satan chased the woman. The woman was given wings to fly into the wilderness. Satan followed spewing out a great flood to drown her. But the earth opened up and swallowed the flood. God protected her as he did Israel and as he does the people of God today.

Christians in the churches of Asia were suffering greatly. Jews were accusing them, the Romans were persecuting them to death, and false teachers were deceiving them. They were the target of Satan on the rampage on earth. This is what John wanted them to understand. They were in a spiritual battle. Hold fast to Christ and you will overcome. *Hold fast what you have till I come* said Jesus. *Hold fast that no one may take your crown* (2:25, 3:11).

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