

Revelation 12:11-17
The Biggest Loser

The Bible – PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO WHAT IS BEHIND THE SPIRITUAL CURTAIN

What are the causes of the difficulties faced by believers? How far back do you want to go? How many layers of the onion do you want to peel away?

The biblical narrative explains that there are things happening that we do not see. There is a spiritual reality that operates outside the bounds of the natural order. This passage in Rev 12 describes THE STORY BEHIND ALL STORIES.

V 1-9

The Woman, Israel / the Church

The Red Dragon, Satan

The Male Child, Christ

The Angel, Michael

10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying,

“Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God, day and night. 11 And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. 12 For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has *only* a short time.”

13 And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *child*. 14 But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she **was* nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. 15 And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. 16 But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. 17 So the dragon was enraged with the woman and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

The persecution, the tribulation of the church is the manifestation in history of a spiritual battle that has been underway from the beginning of the world. Satan has been defeated by Jesus Christ, but precisely because he has been defeated, he rages against the saints. John expects that by laying bare the real cause of the church’s persecution and tribulation, the followers of Christ will be nerved to withstand their tribulations and remain faithful through them.

Satan falls when believers stand firm, v. 11

V. 11 .And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.

Faith in the work of Christ works itself out through obedience, witness, and a love for the One who transcends our lives on earth. As 1 Peter says, “though you do not see Christ, you love Him” and Paul reminds us that “to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

v. 12 The Devil knows that he has only a short time and he is bent on destroying as much as he can.

The Devil has a TV show named after him – THE BIGGEST LOSER

La hoos- er

The Devil is so active, not because he is winning, but because he is losing. He’s on a kamikaze mission. – he wants to do as much harm as he can even if costs him his life.

EX: Long after it was obvious that Hitler's Germany would lose WW II, he commanded his secret police and security forces to continue to wage war on friend and foe alike. The gas chambers continued to operate. Hitler commanded vengeance on his political enemies while locked in his own bunker.

The devil thought he had the victory on Friday, but on Sunday he was defeated, defanged, and cast down.

He's not annihilated so he's still active, but he has lost his power. Part of that power was the fear of death.

14 Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, Christ Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

Satan has played on the fear of death to keep people enslaved. When the gospel goes forth and frees people from fear, the devil loses power. When people turn from God and the Gospel of Hope, they are held in fear.

EX: I'm 66 and have been a news/politics junkie since childhood and during the past 5-7 years there has been an endless parade of news stories about how implementing or NOT implementing this or that government program means that "people are going to die." (Far cry from FDR - nothing to fear but fear itself)

v. 13-14 - the "Exodus imagery" continues as the woman is given eagles wings. The echoes Ex 19

3 Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: 4' You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself.

The woman is nourished in the wilderness like the people of Israel through the worship of the Lord through his ordinances that pointed to Christ.

The Tabernacle was the presence of God - Christ is God with us.

The washings represent the washing away of sin through the blood of Christ

The sacrifices represent the atonement made by Jesus, the Lamb of God.

We'd like to think that God would protect us by taking us into luxurious safe houses. Instead, He takes us to the wilderness. It is there that we learn that He is what we need. God's primary goal is NOT our comfort; It is our holiness and our dependance on Him. We balk at this.

While we are typically oriented toward creating security and stability, God's revelation came to those who were nomads, wonderers, and aliens and strangers. We want to tame or domesticate God, but that won't happen according to our agenda but His....in the New Heavens and New Earth.

Mark Auffarth - "We equate God's blessing with our comfort. But God's blessing is the ability to trust Him in the wilderness with the enemy in hot pursuit." That's the meaning of Ps 23- "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; my cup overflows."

Today, the "woman" i.e. the people of God are also nourished in the house of worship- the body of Christ where the Word is proclaimed, the sacraments are observed, and we are equipped to grow in the grace and knowledge of God.

The devil is busy and he wants us to get busy trying harder to do better to earn our way to God. He delights in that kind of spiritual life. What he hates are the believers who **overcome because of the blood**

of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they do not love their life even when faced with death.

That kind of believer, that kind of church reminds the Devil that he is a L-O-S-E-R. He was defeated by the blood of the Lamb, so when we focus on Christ and His work, the devil hates it.

5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”? 6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, “GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.” 7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

EX: the wicked witch of the west “O what a world, what a world”

v. 15-16 The water flowing from the mouth of the serpent represents words of deceit and confusion. In Revelation we see the symbol of weapons (words) coming out of the mouth of Christ and his agents to judge sinners.(ch 1,2,11,19,21). Here it is water like a river from the mouth of the serpent to overwhelm and deceive the woman.

The Exodus imagery continues in v. 16 as the earth opens up and drank the river. This echoes how the waters parted in the Red Sea and the earth swallowed Pharaoh’s army and then they were drowned in the waters.

We also see in Number 16 and 26 the story of the sons of Korah who rebelled against Moses and Aaron, God’s appointed leaders for the people. God made a division among the people and the earth opened up and swallowed those who “despised the Lord.”

PRINCIPLE: Those who oppose what God has ordained are not just despising the human leaders but the LORD Himself. The sons of Korah used words to try to mislead and deceive the people. Such is the work of the enemy...

v. 9, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world

Satan’s strategy is to defeat the church by deception from within and persecution from without.

Acts 20

29 I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 Therefore be on the alert,

V. 17 Satan continues his attacks on the rest of the children of the woman.

If you are getting fired upon by the enemy then you know you are over the target and are a threat.

Though the devil is the biggest loser, he never takes a day off. He is constantly putting out deception.

Eph 4:14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

Satan is wounded and is angry, so the Quote from the Hobbit applies...

“It does not do to leave a dragon out of your calculations, if you live near him.” (The Hobbit)

The best way to avoid the craftiness of deceitful scheming is to be DEEPLY ROOTED in God and His Word. You can’t identify error if you don’t know the truth.

EX: Have you noticed how hard it is to give yourself to time in the Word? We are easily distracted – “O look, a shoe out of place. I better put that back; Who left this mess in here... etc etc”

Ex: it is also easy to rationalize NOT BEING in worship – C.S Lewis –

When I first became a Christian, about fourteen years ago, I thought that I could do it on my own, by retiring to my rooms and reading theology, and I wouldn’t go to the churches and Gospel Halls; . . . I disliked their hymns very much, which I considered to be fifth-rate poems set to sixth-rate music. But as I went on, I saw the great merit of it. I came up against different people of quite different

outlooks and different education, and then gradually my conceit just began peeling off. I realized that the hymns were being sung with devotion and benefit by an old saint in elastic-side boots in the opposite pew, and then you realize that you aren't fit to clean those boots. It gets you out of your solitary conceit. C. S. Lewis, "Answers to Questions on Christianity," God in the Dock

TODAY the river of deceit and enemy attacks go right after core issues like life, creation in God's image, marriage and family. All of those are deeply God related issues. That's why the devil attacks them.

The attacks are not new, but they are more intense and because of media, they come like a flood. These issues are crucial because they are the building blocks of a healthy society. That's why they are revealed EARLY in the bible.

And the attacks against them are accompanied by harmful actions and consequences.

Voltaire: "Those Who Can Make You Believe Absurdities, Can Make You Commit Atrocities"

The political, military, and personal atrocities carried out in world history were built on absurd beliefs that violated the created order and the revealed will of God.

TODAY'S ABSURD deceptions also lead to cultural atrocities...

Life-issues: All Life has value and is a gift from God as we are made in His Image. If we believe the absurdity that life has no real value or we don't know if there is a human life in the womb, then it leads to atrocities such as abortion and infanticide—practiced in ancient pagan world are now brought back and in some of our states are celebrated and paid for by the state. Some states are considering or have adopted laws that allow for termination of life even after a live birth. Abortion is proposed for the "perinatal period"

<https://www.lifenews.com/2022/04/20/california-assembly-health-committee-passes-bill-that-would-legalize-infanticide/>

The National Center on Health Statistics defines the perinatal period as between 28 weeks of gestation and seven days after birth [but that definition can extend up to the 28 days.](#)

NY, CA, Virginia, CO are among states that have considered or passed such laws, and they do so with glee.

Gender –This gets to the heart of the Image of God in creation. God created "in His image, male and female." This is not small matter, nor is it a social construct. If we deny the divine created order and believe the idea that we don't know what makes someone a male or a female and that doctors are just guessing about gender when a baby is born, then it leads to chemical or surgical sterilization, alterations or mutilations of minor children that have lasting damage.

Marriage- Marriage is a picture of Christ and the church, so an attack on marriage is an attack on the primary symbol of the gospel. When a culture believes that there is nothing special or sacred about marriage, that it is just a social construct and part of the oppressive heteronormative patriarchy and you should be able to marry anyone, then it leads to the breakdown of the fundamental building block of society. Divorce rates are up; marriage rates are down, as are birth rates. This negatively impacts the trajectory of a society.

Family- In Eph 3 Paul prays and bows his knees before the Father from whom EVERY FAMILY in heaven and earth derives its name, so family is deeply rooted in the heart of God. When the value of life itself is questioned and the definitions of gender and marriage are upside down, then the concept of family erodes. And the reality of family has eroded as social and political movements have advocated for the destruction of the basic family unit.

One bad consequence of the drop in marriage and family rates is the increase in the number of children in poverty. **If the US returned to the (higher) marriage rates of 1970, child poverty would be 20% lower (Atlantic Mag – David Brooks)**

Another bad consequence is that when the family is weak and the birth rate is falling, nations head for a demographic meltdown. We may not sense the looming demographic disaster here at Highlands, but America, Japan, China, Iran, and other countries are in big trouble. Programs like Soc Security and Medicare require large numbers of workers paying into the system. Low birthrate=fewer workers=lack of funding= who will take care of grandpa and grandma? Or will we just “expect” them to die at a certain age?

EX: Japan sells more adult diapers than baby diapers.

The health of nations depends on the health of families.

<https://blog.acton.org/archives/50070-americas-looming-demographic-disaster.html>

Dangerous cultural trends related to life, gender, marriage and family don't come from the best and brightest among us. They are attacks on God given institutions and creation ordinances. Why? Because the Devil is a loser, and he wants to destroy God's people.

**** Christian community is an important way to support one another when family life gets tough.**

HOW TO RESPOND?

-BE ON THE ALERT 1 Peter 5- The Devil prowls seeking whom he may devour.

-Pray for the kingdom of Christ to come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

-Guard your hearts and minds DAILY. The enemy is committed to a wartime mentality, not comfort.

-Take Pity on those caught in the schemes and confusion of the enemy. They are tossed to and fro and are under the oppressive sway of the prince of the power of the air without even knowing it.

-Pray for them by name.

Seek to gently bring them into contact with God's Word and God's people.

Be prepared to make a defense for the hope that is within you without buying into the false presuppositions of the culture.

-Stand firm for Christ and His kingdom – Jesus has won, He is winning, He will win.

ALL Believers are overcomers through Christ, but not all those in the visible church are believers. Revelation 2-3 makes it clear that there are those who have been in the visible community but have abandoned Christ.

Revelation also makes it clear that Christ is the only one who can save, and He is mighty to save.

Do you know Him?

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