

8. Satan, a Defeated Enemy (1Q 2019—Revelation)

Biblical material: Revelation 12; Gen. 3:15; Isa. 14:12–15; Dan. 7:23–25; 2 Thess. 2:8–12; Rev. 13:13, 14; 19:20.

Quotes

- Paganism in the moral heaven was cast out of the Roman empire, A. D. 508, when the most of the pagan kings who had overrun the Roman empire, were converted to the Christian faith or embraced Arianism. Then came the song of triumph, in the moral heaven; the accuser of the brethren was cast down. *Josiah Litch* (1838)
- This was fulfilled in the Apostolic day, and the day of Pentecost. “For the accuser of our brethren is cast down...” *William Miller* (1833)
- We are now in a state of controversy, it is a time of war, death and sin, against life and grace, the devil and his angels, are fighting against Michael and his angels, Rev xii. 7--10. *William Miller* (1844)
- Satan is cast down to the earth as the result of Christ's victory over him. He spends his time going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it...But in this very thing we have cause for rejoicing, because in that he is cast down to the earth we have the evidence that salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of God, and the power of His Christ are come to us. *E.J. Waggoner* (1900)
- In the twelfth chapter of Revelation, this dragon is, by common consent, taken to represent the pagan administration of this world's affairs, which was overthrown in the fourth century, and cast down from the supremacy to the footstool of power. *Henry Dana Ward* (1841)

Questions

What would you say is the primary message of these chapters? How is the great controversy theme vital in our understanding? What is particularly significant about the beasts and what they are trying to do? How do we relate to these ideas, and what should be our response? What does an emphasis on Jesus show us?

Bible summary

Revelation 12 speaks of the beginnings of the great controversy in heaven, the “woman” who represents God’s people, the birth of the Savior, the Devil’s hostility, and his persecution of the true people of God. The two beasts of Revelation 13 (more next week) represent the Devil’s false system of belief and worship, and how these beasts seek to impose their will on the people of the earth. Gen. 3:15 speaks of the enmity between the serpent and the woman, and between their offspring—again the great controversy is evident here. Isa. 14:12–15 is part of the prophecy describing Babylon, the symbol of false worship, and how the Devil sought to usurp God’s position. Dan. 7:23-25 describes the “king” who “will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws.” Dan. 7:25 NIV. 2 Thess. 2:8–12 describes the coming of the lawless one.

Comment

The most important aspect in this study is that Satan is a *defeated* enemy. Once again the various interpretations given to these chapters (see above quotes) should warn us against being dogmatic about the details in these chapters. There is however no doubt that Satan has been defeated—not by physical power, but by the moral power of the truth, embodied in the form of Jesus who came to show us the true God and who died to win us back.

This study includes that significant verse, “There was war in heaven.” Revelation 12:7 FBV. In the context here it helps us understand the great controversy, which began in heaven and which has been transferred to earth. Salvation comes to those on earth as part of God’s answer to the Devil’s charges, demonstrating that the real fight is over the nature and character of God in contrast to the lies of the Devil. In fact these two chapters of Revelation pull aside the curtain and show us the cosmic conflict in detail. The Devil is defeated, not by God’s omnipotence, but by his trustworthy love that he shows to all his created beings, wanting everyone to follow the truth because it is the only way to live—right is inherently right and leads to life, wrong is inherently wrong and leads to death. All the Devil’s misrepresentations and falsehoods cannot change any of that, and his self-centered rebellion inevitably leads to destruction—not because God vindictively punishes, but because that is the natural consequence of self-love.

The great controversy is all about God and who he is, and our praise and joy comes from finding out God is not the kind of person the Devil has described, but that he is the source of all that is good and true and loving—revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.

In this giving of himself, God demonstrated not just to us but to the whole universe his true nature and character. He was vindicated, and won the argument that has continued since the Devil first accused God of being unfair. The great controversy, which has been over the character of God, was finally settled. God had proved himself right, and that the charges made against him were utterly false. Jesus proved himself the most faithful Friend, the absolute personification of truth and right.

In this study let’s see God working to show to the whole universe who is telling the truth, and that the end results of rebellion are not a God-imposed punishment, but an inevitable consequence of choosing to believe that evil is good.

Ellen White Comments

The great controversy between the Prince of life and the prince of darkness has been going forward, strengthening with each successive generation. Severe indeed has been the conflict waged between right and wrong, between truth and error, between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. Truth has fought against error and error against truth. The conflict has existed for thousands of years. . . . {CTr 93.2}

The great controversy between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness has not abated one jot or tittle of its fierceness as time has gone on. The stern conflict between light and darkness, between error and truth, is deepening in its intensity. The synagogue of Satan is intensely active, and in this age the deceiving power of the enemy is working in the most subtle way. Every human mind that is not surrendered to God, and is not under the control of the Spirit of God, will be perverted through satanic agencies. {CTr 249.2}