

THE GRACE OF WRATH

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Text

Revelation 12:6-17

Topic

With the great dragon in murderous pursuit,
God gives Jews “two wings of a great eagle
that they might fly into the wilderness to safety”

Title

“Where Eagles Dare to Fled”

Vesna Vulović holds the record.

On January 26, 1972, Vesna was a Serbian flight attendant. She was the sole survivor after a briefcase bomb exploded in the baggage compartment of JAT Flight 367.

She holds the Guinness world record for surviving the highest fall without a parachute: 33,330ft

She suffered a fractured skull, three broken vertebrae, broken legs, broken ribs, and a broken pelvis. She made an almost complete recovery except for walking with a limp.

Thirty years earlier, in January 1942, Luftwaffe fighters attacked Ivan Chisov's Soviet bomber, forcing him to bail out at an altitude of approximately 23,000ft. With the air battle still raging around him, Chisov intentionally did not open his parachute. He feared that he would be an easy target. He planned to drop below the level of the air battle before pulling the ripcord. He lost consciousness before he could.

Despite his injuries, he was able to fly again three months later.

Bear Grylls was skydiving in Zambia in 1996 when his parachute failed. He fell 16,000ft. Grylls went through a year of rehabilitation for a broken back.

The 'highest fall' record is going to be broken one more time by a massive margin in the future.

In verse nine, we're told, "the great dragon was cast out [of Heaven], that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

From Heaven to Earth the hard way. I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Your Accuser Will Fall From Heaven**, and **#2 Your Accuser Will Fail On Earth**.

#1 - Your Accuser Will Fall From Heaven (v6-9)

Superheroes are always falling huge distances. Both Thor and the Hulk survive falling from a S.H.I.E.L.D. hellicarrier in *The Avengers*.

The supervillain, Satan, will be cast down from Heaven along with the 1/3 of the angels who followed him in his initial rebellion.

Rev 12:6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

We commented on verse six in our last study. In Genesis 37:9-10, Joseph says, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me." So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?" (37:9-10).

- The “sun and the moon” are Joseph’s parents, Jacob and Rachel.
- The “eleven stars” are his eleven brothers, the patriarchs of eleven tribes of Israel.
- Joseph is the twelfth star.

The woman clothed with the sun, the moon, and the twelve stars is national Israel.

Satan’s wrath will force Jews living in the Holy Land to flee “into the wilderness.” God will prepare a place where they will be safe for “one thousand two hundred and sixty days,” which is the last half of the Great Tribulation.

Rev 12:7 And war broke out in Heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought,

“Keep your friends close, but your enemies closer.” It is mind-boggling to realize that Satan has access to Heaven.

Satan is in Heaven in the opening chapters of the Book of Job. “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them... Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD” (1:6 & 2:1).

“War” will break out “in Heaven” mid-way through the Great Tribulation. What will that be like? The Book of Daniel mentions a conflict between Gabriel and another angel, the evil Prince of Persia (10:13). He “withstood” Gabriel, hindering his coming to Daniel. How he withstood him is a mystery.

- There was a *Star Trek* original series episode in which two civilizations fight by computer. If you were ‘hit,’ you surrendered yourself to a death chamber.
- In the film *Hook*, an adult Peter Pan has an insult fight with Rufio.
- More recently, StarLord challenged Ronan the Accuser to a winner-take-all dance-off in the first *Guardians of the Galaxy* movie.

Rev 12:8 but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in Heaven any longer.

“They did not prevail” is in the running for the greatest understatement of all time. The outcome of the conflict is never in question.

You might still be doubtful that Satan and his angels could be in Heaven. We read, “Nor was a place found for them in Heaven **any longer.**” There must be a place for them, i.e., access, until this future time.

Rev 12:9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Satan is called “dragon” thirteen times in the Bible, and eight are in this chapter. In the end, the once beautiful anointed cherub (Ezekiel 28:14) who transforms into an angel of light (Second Corinthians 11:14) is a monster.

We are given an incredible insight into thinking about the world we inhabit with concerning nonbelievers.

The devil “deceives the whole world.” This word translated as “deceived” has an intriguing possible definition: *roam from safety, truth, or virtue.*

God’s reveals His truth in the Bible. The devil is deceiving nonbelievers to question God’s Word. “Has God indeed said” are the first recorded words of Satan. He is still prefacing his deception the same way in order to deceive folks into questioning God.

Nonbelievers *roam* about, settling on some philosophy or politics or psychology invented by sinful men in rebellion against God.

Nothing that they find in their roaming can save them, transform them, or bring them peace.

The farther they roam, the weirder their beliefs and behaviors become. Nonbelievers have been roaming far away from biblical marriage.

Biblical marriage is a covenant of companionship between one biological male and one biological female in a heterosexual, monogamous relationship intended to last as long as they live.

Biblical marriage is safe, built upon the *truth*, promoting *virtue*.

Nonbelievers need the truth. They need Jesus.

#2 - Your Accuser Will Fail On Earth (v10-17)

We shouldn't laugh at it or use it in sarcasm, but there *is* something funny about the phrase, "I've fallen, and I can't get up."

In Heaven, Satan's fall won't provoke laughter, but it will produce rejoicing.

Rev 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in Heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

The "loud voice" presents a hymn of praise. "Salvation... strength...the kingdom of God... the power of Christ" are constants in the created universe. They have always been true of our God.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, Satan became the temporary ruler of this world within boundaries God sets. History is the account of God regaining what Adam and Eve forfeited. "Salvation... strength...the kingdom of God... the power of Christ" will be returned. The Revelation explains when and how.

If you are in Christ, you have salvation, spiritual strength, and can do all things through Christ's power. You are already a citizen of His kingdom. You're waiting for it to come fully.

We quoted from the first two chapters in Job. Read them and you get a typical example of Satan as the "accuser." He has been accusing believers since the beginning.

We love a good courtroom drama. When court is in session, the accused doesn't speak to the judge.

An advocate represents him or her. If the defendant does talk, he or she is out of order.

We should keep our mouths shut more often and let our Advocate, Jesus, do the talking.

The judge sustains all Jesus' objections. He has never lost a case. We are always declared, "Not guilty!" To be biblical, we are declared "justified." Thanks to Jesus taking our place in death, God sees me **just-as-if-I'd** never sinned.

Rev 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

This is true of all martyrs. The focus is probably on the Tribulation martyrs. A great number of Jews will die during the Great Tribulation:

Zechariah 13:8 And it shall come to pass in all the land," Says the LORD, "That **two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die**, But one-third shall be left in it:

Zechariah 13:9 I will bring the one-third through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people'; And each one will say, 'The LORD is my God.' "

A martyr is someone who “did not love their lives to the death.” The apostle Paul amplifies that into a way of life when he says, “For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is far better*” (Philippians 1:21&23).

Martyrdom is not contrary to God’s salvation, strength, and power. The bold testimony of a martyr is a tribute to those attributes.

I doubt any of us will be martyred, at least not anytime soon. Make it a question, and ask yourself, “Do I love my life more than dying? More than dying to self?”

The rich young ruler comes to mind. He sincerely desired to follow Jesus. Nevertheless, we read,

Luk 18:22 ... Jesus... said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven; and come, follow Me.”

Luk 18:23 But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.

Luk 18:24 And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!”

You can be sure that Lord will tell you something like he told the rich young ruler. It may be about wealth and possessions. It may be about something, or someone, else, that is an obstacle in your walk.

If Jesus asked you to do something, *would you?* Only you can answer that.

We would have counseled the rich young ruler to take the Lord’s advice. What riches could compare with walking with the Savior? A.W. Tozer wrote, “God wants us to know that when we have Him, we have everything.”

When Jesus asks, be ready to *give up* that you may *gain*.

Rev 12:12 Therefore rejoice, O Heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."

The "sea" might refer to islands. The casting out of the dragon and its aftermath is not local, limited to the Middle East. It is global. Because it is global, we know it hasn't happened yet.

"Great wrath" is beyond anger. It is outrage. Satan will no longer be content to lay traps and set snares. He won't have the luxury of being patient. He will go 5150. He will be in a road-rage state of mind, pulling out all the stops to shed blood - especially Jewish blood.

His "short time" is yet another reminder that this is looking to the future. *It hasn't happened yet.*

Rev 12:13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *Child*.

Satan is stunned for a moment. He sees that he has been "cast to the earth." Shaking off his bewilderment, he realizes he has landed in chapter twelve of the Revelation.

We saw last week that the "male Child" born to national Israel as their Messiah, and the Savior of the world, is Jesus. Throughout history, the devil tried to prevent Jesus from being born. Having failed, his only strategy in the future will be to try to exterminate Jews. If he can kill every Jew, God cannot fulfill the unconditional promises He has made to them.

Rev 12:14 But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.

It is good to be reminded of two things:

1. The Bible is the best commentary on the Bible.
2. The Revelation draws heavily from the Old Testament.

Let's see how this applies to the "eagle." "Two wings of a great eagle" is a biblical image that was well-known to Jews:

- In Exodus 19:4, we read, "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how I bore you on eagles' wings* and brought you to Myself."
- In Deuteronomy 32:11, God says of Himself, "As an **eagle** stirs up its nest, Hovers over its young, Spreading out its wings, taking them up, Carrying them on its wings..."

The eagle is not from *The Lord of the Rings*. It won't be an airlift provided by the United States. It is a well-known biblical metaphor.

Jews will flee to a "place" to be safe from Satan. Earlier in the chapter, we are told that God will prepare it. The present popular pick is Petra. "Nourished" conveys the idea of health and prosperity.

"A time and times and half a time" is one of the three ways of describing the two three and one-half years of the seven year Great Tribulation. The other two are "One thousand two hundred and sixty days," and "Forty-two months."

God the Holy Spirit went to great lengths to establish that the Revelation is talking about a literal, not figurative, period.

One proponent of the figurative position says that the last three and one-half years of the Great Tribulation corresponds "with the exact time frame of the worst tribulation in Jewish history, the Jewish-Roman War (66-70AD)."

As awful as that period of history was for Israel, it did not last precisely three and one-half years. Jesus said, "Then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21). Jesus went on to say,

Mat 24:29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from Heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Mat 24:30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in Heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory.

Mat 24:31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the other."

Did anything remotely like that happen in 70AD? Has it happened at any point in history? No, *it is future.*

Rev 12:15 So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood.

There are two possibilities concerning the "flood":

1. Floods are a biblical metaphor for invasion. In Jeremiah 47:2, God describes the approaching Babylonian army by saying, "Behold, waters rise out of the north, **And shall be an overflowing flood;** They shall overflow the land and all that is in it, The city and those who dwell within; Then the men shall cry, And all the inhabitants of the land shall wail."
2. The second possibility is that the devil *does* unleash a flood of water against those who are fleeing. In every excellent disaster film, there is a moment when the wave or the lava is about to reach the heroes as they run for their lives.

Rev 12:16 But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.

It wouldn't be the first time in the history of Israel that God caused the ground to open and swallow opposition. However this is accomplished, it will be by divine interference and not by natural means.

Rev 12:17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The TV Bruce Banner is famous for saying, "Don't make me angry. You wouldn't like me when I'm angry." An "enraged" dragon is terrifying.

"The rest of her offspring" is believed by some scholars to refer to the 144,000 Jewish evangelists we met earlier in the Revelation. They don't flee to safety because God sealed them, and they cannot be harmed.

Satan is a miserable failure in his campaign against them. Every one of the 144,000 survives to the end.

Another Bible gem is, "Who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." I don't know about you, but I'd like to be able to be described in those terms once my work on Earth ends.

The worst of times for Earth are coming in the subsequent chapters. So is Jesus.

The stunt was called "Heaven Sent." Luke Aikins in 2016 jumped 25,000ft. from a plane without a parachute or wingsuit. The daredevil had to direct his body in free fall using only the air currents around him.

He wasn't completely crazy. He laid out a high-tech 10,000-square-foot net to catch him.

I don't want to push the analogy too far, but there are elements in Aikins' chuteless jump similar to our walk with Jesus.

We walk by faith:

- It isn't blind faith; it isn't ignorant faith; it isn't reckless faith.
- We aren't jumping off of precipices tempting angels to save us.

We can, however, trust too much in parachutes.

Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). The alternative is to build your house on sand, storing up this world's wealth in barns.

Take off worldly parachutes. You are "Heaven sent" to represent Jesus. The Lord is your net.

"Might as well jump."