

Lesson 10 – 3 January 2010

The Conflict of the Ages

Lesson Scope: [Revelation 12 and 13](#)

Lesson Focus

The conflict of the ages began with Satan's initial rebellion, and it will culminate in Satan's final and eternal judgment. Satan's success in deceiving man is followed by his efforts to frustrate God's plan of redemption. At Calvary Jesus secured the victory over Satan and made it possible for man to be victorious in the conflict. Satan's shortsightedness is seen in the crucifying of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:8).

The opening verses of Revelation 12 reflect back to Satan's opposition at the time of Christ's birth and then move to the end-time scene. Finally the Lamb will overcome the forces of evil, and Satan himself will be cast into the lake of fire. Satan's use of deception is a significant facet of the lesson. The whole antichrist system mimics the true. In 12:9 Satan is identified as the one "which deceiveth the whole world." Of the second beast it is said, "And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth" (13:14).

Lesson Aim: To see principles concerning the conflict between God and Satan.

Theme Verse

[John 16:33](#). These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but he of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Lesson Text

Great Wonders

[Rev. 12:1](#)

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

[Rev. 12:3-4](#) And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns

upon his heads. ⁴And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

[Rev. 12:8](#)

And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

[Rev. 12:10-13](#)

And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. ¹¹And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. ¹²Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. ¹³And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man *child*.

Great Wickedness

[Rev. 13:1](#)

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

[Rev. 13:3-4](#)

And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. ⁴And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who *is* like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

[Rev. 13:6-8](#)

And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. ⁷And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. ⁸And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

[Rev. 13:11-12](#)

And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. ¹²And he exerciseth all the

power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

[Rev. 13:16-18](#)

And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: ¹⁷And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. ¹⁸Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number *is* Six hundred threescore *and* six.

Questions for Study

Great Wonders

1. Why was the dragon so intent on destroying the Man-child?
2. How did Satan go about to destroy Jesus?
3. How does Satan's loss of access to the heavenlies affect his activities on the earth?
4. What keys to victory enable the saints to overcome the dragon?

Great Wickedness

5. In what ways does Satan employ deceit in this end-time scene of conflict?
6. How is life made difficult for the saints during this time?
7. What are some conditioning effects of the antichrist system today?
8. How can God's people avoid end-time deception?

Analyzing the Passage

The woman represents God's people. In Old Testament times, they were the Jews through whom Christ came. From the Gospels we learn of Satan's effort to destroy Jesus at birth. The resurrection and ascension apparently took Satan by surprise.

The war in heaven and the casting out of Satan from heaven limit him to the earth. Satan works frantically, and a cry of "woe" is given to those living on the earth. But there is rejoicing in heaven. In his wrath, Satan makes a concerted effort against God's people, but God comes to their rescue and Satan's efforts are limited.

Chapter 13 describes the diabolical trinity and the development of the end-time antichrist system. The dragon, who gives the beast his power and authority imitates God. The beast whose deadly wound was healed, mimics

the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The miracles and wonders of the second beast counterfeit the work of the Holy Spirit. This is a time of great deception because of the miraculous power of the second beast.

Of particular interest is the mark of the beast and his control of buying and selling. And of special comfort are the angels who fly through the heavens warning men not to receive the mark (Revelation 14:8-10). The number six hundred sixty-six is not mystical, it will not take God's people by surprise. Those who receive this mark will experience God's wrath.

Principles and Applications

Great Wonders

1. *The conflict between God and Satan involves the realm of the heavenlies (12:7).*

The conflict on earth is an extension of the conflict in the heavenlies. Throughout the Scriptures we are given glimpses of this reality. For example, Satan's forces detained the heavenly messenger that was sent to Daniel (Daniel 10:12-13). We, like Job, are oblivious to all that is happening behind the scenes. But we know that God is able to keep us from falling (Jude 24-25).

2. *Since the Fall of Man Satan's attacks are aimed directly at God's redemptive purposes for mankind (12:1-5).*

Satan did his best to spoil the plan. He used Herod in an effort to kill Jesus in infancy. He confronted Jesus with personal temptations to sin and to dodge the cross. To his own defeat, he had Jesus crucified. Now that the plan is in place Satan is still busy persecuting, deceiving, and leading astray.

3. *The outcome of this age-old conflict is certain (12:7-8).*

All along the way Satan has been losing the battle. The war described in this lesson is another case in point. This battle is especially significant because it reveals to Satan that his time is short. Satan will fight to the end, but God and righteousness will triumph over him.

4. *God's people incur Satan's wrath (12: 10-17).*

After Satan loses the battle against Michael and his angels and is limited to the earth, he vents against his wrath against God's people. Paul told Timothy, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer Persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). Satan is bent on corrupting and destroying God's people in our day.

Great Wickedness

5. *Satan intensifies his efforts by embodying himself in an end-time system and ruler (13:1-4).*

This system makes it very difficult for the saints. They are unable to buy or sell without the mark of the beast. They are persecuted and slain for believing the truth. It is a worldwide system; there is no country to which they can escape. It is Satan's day but it will be brought to naught.

6. *The beast is captivating in his person and universal in his authority 13:3-4, 6-8).*

He is admired and looked up to as the man of the hour. People are impressed with his person and influence. May it not be so in the church. We must be impressed by truth and holiness rather than by personality and power.

7. *Satan's efforts are characterized by counterfeits, great wonders, and deceptions (13:3-5, 11-14).* Through miracles and lying wonders the unbelieving world is deceived into worshiping the beast and receiving his mark. But we ask, were not Christ's miracles the proof of His deity? Did not miracles accompany the apostles as evidence of their authority? The answer comes back; Yes, but Satan cannot give men power to live in holiness. Righteousness and true holiness are companion signs of the true man of God.

8. *End-time deception can be detected and avoided by the spiritually wise (13:18).*

Significantly, the prophetic Scriptures identify the beast by giving the number of his name. God is ever faithful to reveal truth to those who want to know. Jesus taught that a false prophet is detected by his life rather than by his message: "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20). The Scriptures are the standard of judgment, and judgment will be according to our works (Revelation 20:13).

Important Teachings

1. The conflict between God and Satan involves the realm of the heavenlies (12:7).
2. Since the Fall of Man Satan's attacks are aimed directly at God's redemptive purposes for mankind (12:1-5).
3. The outcome of this age-old conflict is certain (12:7-8).
4. God's people incur Satan's wrath (12:10-17).

5. Satan intensifies his efforts by embodying himself in an end-time system and ruler (13:1-4).
6. The beast is captivating in his person and universal in his authority (13:3-4, 6-8).
7. Satan's efforts are characterized by counterfeits, great wonders, and deceptions (13:3-5, 11-14).
8. End-time deception can be detected and avoided by the spiritually wise (13:18).

Answers to Questions

1. Why was the dragon so intent on destroying the Man-child?

Satan had some idea of the purpose of the Incarnation. This is seen in the temptations that Jesus faced in the wilderness, and by the recognition that the demons gave when Jesus cast them out of the Gadarene demoniac (Luke 8:28). But there was a limit to Satan's understanding, or he would not have had Jesus crucified. If Satan could have, he would have averted the plan of redemption. Instead, God used Satan's efforts to accomplish the plan.

2. How did Satan go about to destroy Jesus?

Satan used Herod to try to kill Jesus in infancy. He used the Jewish leaders to try stoning Him during His ministry. He tempted Jesus to sidestep the Father's will. He worked through the Jewish leaders and Pilate to have Jesus crucified, and so forth.

3. How does Satan's loss of access to the heavenlies affect his activities on the earth?

Satan intensifies his efforts because he knows that his time is short. In his wrath he seeks to persecute and destroy God's people, "which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (12:17). He goes about to establish his own kingdom through the antichrist system.

4. What keys to victory enable the saints to overcome the dragon?

Foremost is the blood of Jesus that cleanses from sin; otherwise, we would experience God's wrath with the devil and his followers. Another key is the "word of their testimony." They were willing to acknowledge their allegiance to Christ, even though their witnessing brought death. Jesus said, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it" (Mark 8:35).

5. *In what ways does Satan employ deceit in this end-time scene of conflict?*

Of particular interest is the counterfeit diabolic trinity. The dragon imitates God the Father, the first beast mimics the work of Christ, and the false prophet counterfeits the work of the Holy Spirit. Like it was with Christ, people will be very impressed with the philosophies and powers of the first beast. Special mention is made of his deadly wound that was healed. Even more deceiving is the miraculous power of the false prophet who gives life to the image of the beast and calls fire down from heaven as Elijah did.

6. *How is life made difficult for the saints during this time?*

Life for the saints will be made very difficult because they will not be able to buy or sell without the mark of the beast. And to receive the mark will be an open denial of their faith. This unequal yoke will eclipse all others. Also, refusal to worship the image of the beast carries the death penalty.

7. *What are some conditioning effects of the antichrist system today?*

Chief among antichrist forces today is counterfeit religion, including "easy Christianity." By mixing ungodliness and error with religion, Satan deprives man of the life-changing power of true religion and thus prepares him to accept his counterfeits. We must beware any religion or teaching that minimizes the forsaking of sin and personal cross-bearing. A multitude of unequal yokes in business and social life hold potential to draw us into ungodliness. Satan is also intriguing many through the proliferation of technology. Fascination with the occult is also leading many into Satan's grip.

8. *How can God's people avoid end-time deception?*

We avoid deception by knowing God's Word and living in obedience to it. Of special importance is separation from the world and the avoidance of the unequal yoke. It takes self-denial and a willingness to die for the faith. We must not be impressed by personal charisma or purported miracles, but instead emphasize righteousness and true holiness. We must be vigilant and ready for the return of Christ. We pray to God for wisdom (13:18).

Summarizing the Lesson

Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). That speaks of the conflict that is raging. This conflict divides families and churches. There is a cross to bear and a life to lose for the sake of the Gospel. But Satan will be cast

down, and we shall share in Christ's victory "if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end" (Hebrews 3:14).

Research Guide

1. Revelation 17:7-14 explains the seven heads and ten horns of the dragon and the first beast.
2. Daniel 7 and 8 are parallel passages and will give helpful details and breadth to the lesson text.