

There was War in Heaven

✠ **Satan lost.** (vv.7-9)

✠ **Saints rejoice.** (vv.10-12)

In the name of Jesus, our Champion and Savior, dearly loved brothers and sisters in Christ:

One of the great sadnesses of my ministry is seeing people who are losing “the good fight of faith.” Many are happy with good health, strong mind and body, lots of toys for boys and girls. Many young Christians who stood before God’s altar and swore to be faithful to Jesus even in the face of death, fail to fight because life seems good. Satan has many happily on their way to hell. That’s all he wants.

Then there are stragglers, sheep who fall behind. Peaceful, happy in the Good Shepherd’s care, they fail to manage their time for God. Instead, they get busy in the weed patches of false teaching and start drinking from mud puddles of secular humanism. Tastes so sweet at first, but parasites are growing inside. Lack of good time management leads away from God’s Word and into worry, paranoia, even panic attacks. Some don’t know where to turn. When they finally call, I’m so grateful to God for giving them my number. Very soon Jesus nurtures them with His Word and gets them back on track. Satan loses every soul that comes into the shelter of God’s grace. That’s all God wants, salvation for all.

✠ **Satan lost.** (vv.7-9)

This battle for souls is the subject of the seven visions we call Revelation, the last of the Bible’s sixty-six books. *“The revelation [apocalypse] of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known [ἐσήμανεν – symbolized] by sending an angel to John, who testifies to everything he saw – that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.”* (1:1-3) The book of Revelation is like looking through God’s camera up to heaven, then down to earth and back to heaven again. The whole New Testament era is depicted in fantastic imagery and pictures, some quite frightening others full of awesome comfort.

“I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. On the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit...” (1:9f NIV84) According to Christian tradition, the Roman government had already tried to kill John in a kettle of boiling oil. But Jesus had promised John would not die as a martyr. John survived – and his executioners converted to Christ. What we know for sure from this passage is that the Elder, Pastor John suffered exile across the waters of the Aegean Sea not far from his congregation in Ephesus. On a Sunday, God the Holy Spirit let John see into the spirit world.

In the skies over Patmos a fierce battle was raging. You might think at first that this must be a flashback to the beginning when Satan and his demons first rebelled. God created all the angels holy sometime during the six days of Creation Week. But some angels refused to accept God’s Word that He is their Creator. They preferred a big bang as they tried to make everything blow up in God’s face. According to Jesus’ brother Jude, Satan and his demons *“did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these [God] has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.”* (Jude 6 NIV84; See also 2 Peter 2:4.) God’s Word has them chained.

But here what the NIV reports as, *“There was war in heaven,”* might better be translated as, *“There was war in the sky...”*¹ In apocalyptic imagery, Satan is pictured as a dragon, fierce and frightening like the larger dinosaurs to ancient people before they were finally killed off and became

¹ Becker, Siegbert W. Translation from: *REVELATION The Distant Triumph Song*. Milwaukee, WI: NPH, 1985, p.185.

extinct during the Middle Ages. The lead angel of God's loyal creation, Archangel Michael, ***“fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in the sky. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”*** Because of this battle, Satan and his demons were no longer allowed to roam the skies, but have been confined to this earth. God wants us to know that when **There was War in Heaven, Satan lost.**

✠ **Saints rejoice. (vv.10-12)**

After a war is over, the winning side naturally celebrates. Even if you were not in combat, you're glad your guys won, especially if the threat came close to home or tore at your heart when loved ones died. But first you have to hear about the victory. Maybe you've seen movies about soldiers who kept fighting after the war was over. Everyone needs to hear the Good News.

The Lord's Apostle John writes: ***“Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: ‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.’”***

Here's one reason I'm convinced this war was fought in the sky in connection with Jesus' death and resurrection. Satan is always acting like the most dirty prosecuting attorney imaginable. First, he tempts people to sin by making God look bad and everything that feels good seem harmless. Then he wants to rush into God's presence (Job 1, 2), accusing us of the same sins he tempted us to commit. But his hellish tactics won't work because Michael's angels gave Satan a nose bleed that just won't quit. They broke his wings and pounded him down so hard he can never get off the ground again.

This victory is yours and mine by faith in Jesus. Maybe you heard echoes of our liturgy in verse 10. Remember what the pastor says when we're about to receive Christ's body and blood? For the forgiveness of all our sins and the strengthening of our faith in Him: ***“Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ...”***² The Lord's Christ, Jesus Himself, saved us from sin, death and hell. God's own Son rescued us from the power of the devil. By rising from the dead Jesus stripped Satan of his ultimate weapon, the fear of death. He took away all Satan's bombs and bullets because no accusation can stick in God's courtroom. As the Holy Spirit says through Paul in the Great Victory Chapter, Romans 8: ***“Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”*** (8:33f NIV84)

Early New Testament believers faced dreadful persecution from the Roman government, but refused to renounce the Name of Jesus or worship the emperor. ***“They overcame [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.”*** And that's how you and I can overcome the old evil foe. Say it out loud like Jesus when Satan tempted Him: ***“Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”*** (Matthew 4:10 NIV84) When you testify to your own heart about Jesus by reading the Bible, as you testify this Good News to others, you beat down Satan again and again with God's Word.

Satan lost. Saints rejoice. God wants joy for all creation including His holy angels: ***“Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.”*** Beware!

Heap woe on Satan's head with this Good News: ***“Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”*** (Isaiah 1:18) Fight the good fight of faith because ***“as far as the east is from the west, so far has [God] removed our transgressions from us.”*** (Psalm 103:12) ***“Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven.”*** (Matthew 9:2) ***“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”*** (James 4:7) Amen.

² *Christian Worship – A Lutheran Hymnal*, “SERVICE OF WORD AND SACRAMENT,” p. 34.