



REVELATION

the WISDOM JOURNEY
LESSON 770

THE ORIGIN OF ANTI-SEMITISM

REVELATION 12

The hatred and persecution of the Jewish people throughout history is testimony to their unique place in God's eternal plan. Satan tries to destroy them in order to destroy God's plan and promises. Revelation 12 reveals Satan's long war against Israel.

Have you ever wondered why anti-Semitism never seems to go away, why the history of the Jewish people is filled with persecution as nation after nation has exiled them or attempted to eliminate them?

The Bible actually gives us the origin of anti-Semitism. It all started when God created the Jewish nation from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—who was later renamed Israel. God established an eternal, unconditional covenant with Israel and determined that the Jewish people would become the central theme in His prophetic plan. That plan included the coming of the Messiah, who would be a descendant of Abraham.

If you take the Bible literally, as I do, the covenant promised Israel a literal piece of land, a literal kingdom, and a King who would sit upon a literal throne in a literal city called Jerusalem.

So understand Satan's thinking: If he can destroy the Jewish people, there is no Messiah. And if there is no Messiah, there is no salvation. And if there is no nation of Israel, God

will not have kept His promises for Israel to inherit their promised land with a promised kingdom and a promised throne in Jerusalem.

And that is why anti-Semitism never seems to go away.

But the truth is, we have not seen anything yet. During the tribulation period, as God begins to revive and restore the nation of Israel, Satan will intensify his attacks. We know that because of Revelation 12, where we are given an overview of Satan's efforts to wipe out the Jewish people.

Chapter 12 begins in verse 1 by introducing us to "a great sign . . . in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." The woman is called a "great sign," which clues us in that she is symbolic.

The context of this chapter clearly indicates she symbolizes Israel. The sun, moon, and stars appeared together in Joseph's dream in Genesis 37, where they represented Israel.

Verse 2 tells us this woman is in labor and about to give birth, and verse 3 introduces the great danger to her offspring. John writes, “And another sign appeared . . . a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems.” We do not need to wonder who this dragon is, because down in verse 9 we read, “And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan.”

So, this vision is symbolic of Satan attempting to destroy Israel. The seven heads and ten horns will appear later in chapters 13 and 17.¹ But for now, let me fill in the blanks. The seven heads are the seven consecutive world empires: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and then a final, seventh kingdom, which will be ruled by the Antichrist.²

The Dragon has ten horns and diadems. Daniel 7 identifies these as ten kings who create an alliance under the Antichrist.

Revelation 12:4 says that the Dragon’s “tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth.” These stars are fallen angels (see Revelation 9:1; 12:8-9). In Satan’s original rebellion against God, one-third of the angels, now known as demons, followed him.

Why is Satan after this woman who is about to give birth? Again, we do not have to guess. We are told here in verse 4 that the Dragon wants to kill the Child she is about to deliver. And who is this Child? Verse 5 tells us: “She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron.” That is a clear reference to the woman, Israel, delivering the Messiah; and Satan certainly did everything he could to destroy Jesus, the

Messiah, and to oppose and discredit Him during His earthly ministry.

Satan failed, of course. In fact, the next phrase in verse 5 says the male child “was caught up to God and to his throne.” This pictures the ascension of Christ back to His throne of glory.

We are effectively told that after the ascension of Christ back to heaven, Satan turned his attention back to this woman, Israel, to try to destroy her. Beloved, this is at the root of the last 2,000 years of anti-Semitism. Even though the world does not even know why they hate the Jewish people, here is the reason: Satan is behind the scenes, motivating, manipulating, and incentivizing the unbelieving world to wipe out the Jewish people.

And Satan knows he is running out of time. Verse 6 tells us that at the halfway point in the seven-year tribulation, Israel flees “into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.” That is exactly three and a half years—the last half of the tribulation.

At this point, the apostle John has his attention directed to heaven and to a future war that takes place there:

*Michael [the archangel, Jude 9]
and his angels [fought] against
the dragon. And the dragon and
his angels fought back, but he was
defeated, and there was no longer
any place for them in heaven.*

(verse 7)

This is an interesting revelation. Satan had not been forbidden access to God after he first rebelled. We know from the book of Job and other passages that Satan directly accuses believers before God.

But this reference in Revelation 12:7 informs us that Satan is no longer allowed any access to the presence of God. He is kicked out for good.

And John records this shout of victory in heaven:

*“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
brothers has been thrown down.”
(verse 10)*

The devil cannot even accuse a believer anymore, and he is not happy about it at all. Verse 12 says he comes down to earth “in great wrath,” knowing “his time is short!”

He begins to pursue “the woman who had given birth to the male child” (verse 13). But God protects Israel:

*The woman was given the two
wings of the great eagle so that she
might fly from the serpent into the
wilderness, to the place where she
is to be nourished. (verse 14)*

For three and a half years, God will supernaturally protect these Jewish people, who have more than likely become followers of Christ.

The wings of an eagle symbolize the speed of God’s protection.

We are not told where this “wilderness” region is located. Many suggest it might be Petra, the ancient mountain city of Edom carved out of rock and accessible only by a narrow path between the cliffs.

Wherever it is, Satan finds out and evidently figures out a way to create a flood to drown them. John records how that turns out in verses 15-16:

*The serpent poured water like a
river out of his mouth after the
woman, to sweep her away with a
flood. But the earth . . . opened its
mouth and swallowed the river.*

God miraculously diverts the water and saves them from certain death. Verse 17 says Satan then becomes even more furious and goes off to “make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who . . . hold to the testimony of Jesus.”

You cannot study this chapter without recognizing two truths. First, Satan is unrelenting in his attacks on the Jewish people. And second, he is going to fail completely in the end.

In the meantime, beloved, submit yourselves to God. That is the way to resist the devil as you battle him today. Draw near to God, and the devil will flee from you (James 4:7-8).

The devil cannot get close to you when you are close to God. So, with obedience and confidence, let us walk closely with the Lord.

How does understanding the spiritual origin of anti-Semitism change your perspective on the Jewish people and God's covenant with them?

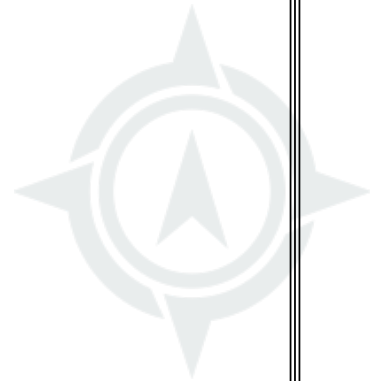
In what ways does Satan's opposition to God's promises affect how you view your own spiritual battles today?

What does this passage teach you about the importance of staying faithful to God's Word, even in the face of opposition?

How does the vision of God's protection of Israel during the tribulation strengthen your trust in God's care for you today?

How does Satan's desire to accuse believers remind you to rely on Christ's finished work and the victory we have in Him?

Plot your Wisdom Journey.
How would the Lord have you respond to what you've learned today?



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¹See Revelation 13:1-4; 17:7-14.

²Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22* (Moody Press, 1995), 123, 297-98.