

## **When God Pulls Back the Curtain**

Revelation 12:1-6

(preached Pine Grove 4/9/17; Sunday AM)

### **Introduction**

Stevie Wonder, once said,

“Sometimes, I feel I am really blessed to be blind because I probably would not last a minute if I were able to see things.”

That may seem like an interesting quote from one of the most famous blind people of all time...

Yet, Stevie Wonder often thought that his blindness was a gift that allowed his music career to take off...

Wonder would later say that he didn't think he would have been able to write some of the great love songs if he had ever seen the hate of the world with his own eyes..

Though I am thankful for my sight, Stevie Wonder is on to something here...

Maybe blindness is a blessing...

Sometimes, a task at work or at home requires us to be blind to the distractions around us...

There are times when disasters strike, and we are grateful for people who refuse to panic in the moment and are blind to all the dangers and go in and do their job..

I think of fireman and first responders who all need to be blind at times to get their work done..

I think of a sick or injured child that throws one parent into a frenzy, but the other parent focuses on just getting that child to medical care..

In that case, it is good to be blind to all the possibilities and focus on the task at hand...

Yet, in all of those cases, there isn't a lack of sight...

Those people can still see; they just are blind in a figurative sense..

Yet, there is a physical blindness that all of us share that is a great blessing to us..

And that is the blindness to the spiritual world that exists around us...

Listen to how the Bible describes the spiritual world that exists around us..

*Ephesians 6:10-12...*

***10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against [e]flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.***

In other words, the struggle of the Christian is not always against other people, but against a world of darkness that he can't see or experience with any of the other 4 senses...

As you sit here, each of you are blind to that world around us..

And I like Stevie Wonder consider that blindness a blessing..

I dont necessarily want to see the evil forces that wage war against me...

Nor do I even care to see the forces of the Lord that fight for me...

That would probably be equally frightening...

Nearly every time a heavenly angel made an appearance in the Bible, his first words to the person he was visiting were “do not fear.”

So, I am for one am blessed to be blind to the reality of spiritual forces, both good and bad, around me on a daily basis..

Yet, I cannot afford to be ignorant or filled with an unbelief that denies this truth..

The Scriptures tells me these unseen spiritual forces are real, but not only are they real...

They wage war with one another constantly...

The heavenly angels led by the Lord...

The forces of righteous and holiness...

Battle the demonic angels led by Satan...

And the evil and unrighteousness that they spread..

And this battle has raged since Satan rebelled in heaven after the creation of the world..

You see, Satan was an angel created by God and given a position of prominence in God’s created order..

Yet, the Bible says that Satan was filled with pride and was not content to serve the God who created him..

So, Satan sets his sights on rebellion against God with the hopes that he could eventually defeat God and establish his own order...

And he was able to rally 1/3 of the other angels of heaven to join him in his rebellion...

In that moment, the war of Satan versus God was born...

Now, you have to remember that this isn't a fair fight...

As a created being, Satan is still under the authority of God..

He can do no more than the Lord allows..

We know this from the first chapter of Job, yet that doesn't stop Satan from testing his limits and trying everything he can to stop the plans of the Lord...

We are people are oblivious at times to this war that rages around us and even for our souls..

Not only are we not able to physically see this war, we are also so focused on this world that we never even notice the war that wages around us and even for our own soul...

Now as we go through the book of Revelation verse by verse, we have been looking at the final 7 years of the earth's existence...

This time period known as the tribulation..

This time after the rapture of the church to heaven, where God begins to rid the earth of sin and sinners but also works to bring Israel to salvation...

We have looked at this from chapters 4 to 11, and we have seen the judgments that God sends to the earth in the seal judgments and the trumpet judgments which begin to change the world as we know it...

Worldwide wars, famines, earthquakes, fresh water drinking supply poisoned...

We have watched a large portion of the world's population die as a result of these judgments....

And this has been pretty much a one sided view of these final 7 years, but don't think for a minute that Satan plans to go quietly...

No, he will not roll over and raise the white flag...

Instead, he will raise his game to new heights as well seeking to keep God from ending the world and setting His Son to rule over it...

You see, Satan has always wanted to rule this world...

Therefore, his plan has been to fight against the plans of God, to rid the earth of Christ, and to establish his own kingdom...

Now you may ask, how do you know all this?

Well, the Bible teaches all of this, but in Revelation 12:1-6 that we will look at today, we simply get the summary of these truths...

And the point of this section which starts in chapter 12 and ends in chapter 14 is to give us the perspective of Satan as the curtain begins to close on his work...

As I said before, the devil will not go quietly...

He started the fight with God and he will do all he can to win the fight in these final 7 years and we are going to spend much of the remaining part of the book of Revelation seeing the fight he puts up...

So, let's read the verses before us and then we will go back and get an understanding of them...

***Revelation 12:1-6...***

***12 A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; 2 and she was with child; and she \*cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth.***

***3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. 4 And his tail \*swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.***

***5 And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to [a]rule all the [b]nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. 6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she \*had a place prepared by God, so that there [c]she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.***

Now, as come to Revelation 12, we come to a section that deals with signs and symbols..

As I have told you before, the Bible is to be read and interpreted literally...



God desired for his people to know the truth by what they read, not by what they imagined from his word...

In the few places in Scripture that are meant to be taken symbolically, God tells you that...

This begins a section of Revelation that deals with symbolism...

Everything up to this point, we have taken literally...

There will be a literal fiery mountain that falls to earth in the tribulation....

There will be a literal meteor shower that contaminates a large part of the freshwater drinking supply..

There will be a literal global earthquake...

There will be two men who serve as gospel preachers that will preach to the people in Jerusalem, be killed, lie in the streets for 3 days, and then rise from the dead and taken to heaven while the world watches...

There will be a literal Satanic army that kills a third of the population of earth....

Yet, when we get to chapter 12 and we meet a lady and a dragon, they are signs of something else...

We are not meant to see these as a literal lady and a literal dragon...

They both represent something else...

So, let's start with...

## **I. The Sign of the Woman (1-2)**

In verse 1, the apostle John who wrote the book of Revelation sees something in heaven...

He sees this woman, and he describes her in this way...

She is clothed in the sun, which suggests brilliance and honor...

She is standing on the moons which suggest a place of superiority...

And she is crowned with a tiara of 12 stars...

Which suggests a place of prominence...

And then we see that she is pregnant and about to give birth...

So what does this woman represent?

Well, she represents the nation of Israel...

A nation that was founded in Genesis 12 as God came to Abraham and promised to make his name great and bring a nation north from his children...

A man God also promised to give a land and to make him a blessing to world...

And from the birth of Israel with Abraham in Genesis 12, the OT goes to detail the actions of this nation in the world...

It was nation that really came to prominence from 12 sons of Jacob, which eventually became the twelve tribes of Israel which are seen in the 12 stars on this woman's crown...

But we also see another truth about Israel in the sun that clothes her...

One of Israel's many purposes was to be a light to the nations...

Their unusual diets...

Their unusual festivals...

Their unusual code of laws...

And their real unusual practice of worshipping just one God were meant to be an attraction to the world...

They were meant to draw the nations to their God like the Sun in the sky...

But we also see another great purpose of Israel in the world, and that is this...

They were supposed to be the vehicle that brought a Savior to the world...

You see, the idea of Jesus dying for the world didn't just appear in the NT...

That idea began all the way back in Genesis 3...

Once Adam and Eve ate the fruit and sinned against God, they were cast from the Lord's company...

A holy God could no coexist with unholy people...

Therefore God cursed the man and the woman, but he did not leave them without hope...

He told them both that he would one day send someone born of a woman to crush the head of the serpent that led them both into sin....

All Adam and Eve knew was that a Savior was coming to crush the serpent...

And all they knew is that he would one day come from the seed of a woman...

When God came to Abraham and told him that he would be a blessing to the world, the idea is that the nation that

came from Abraham would be the nation that made the promise of Genesis 3 a reality...

Now, no one know that it would take God 2000 years from promising that to Abraham and then bringing Jesus to the world...

But the nation of Israel began to understand that they were the nation chosen for this great honor....

And so we see this woman with child but her labor pains are difficult....

And that was the case for Israel all throughout the OT...

They labored to bring forth the Messiah by living in disobedience followed by the discipline of the Lord..

They were attacked by other nations...

Carried into captivity...

Their labor to bring forth a Savior was difficult to say the least...

And so let's leave the lady who represents Israel for a moment to meet another sign of chapter 12....

And that is.....

## **II. The Sign of the Dragon (3-4)**

In verse 3, John sees another sign in heaven...

This time, it is a great red dragon with seven heads with seven crowns and 10 horns..

And the dragon uses his tail to sweep a third of the stars of heaven down to the earth and then he stand before the woman of verses 1-2 as she prepares to give birth, so that he can devour the child..

Now what is this sign supposed to represent?

Well, the dragon is a sign that points to Satan in 3 different periods of time...

Going in chronological order, the first thing we notice is that the dragon sweeps a third of the stars of heaven down to the earth...

I simply see this as reference to Satan's fall from heaven...

Some time in eternity past before the earth was created, angels were also created.

And as I said before, Satan began his existence as a heavenly angel...

He was beautiful and higher than possible every other angel...

Listen to how Satan is described in Ezekiel 28:12-15....

***“You [d]had the seal of perfection,  
Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.***

**13**

***“You were in Eden, the garden of God;  
Every precious stone was your covering:  
The ruby, the topaz and the diamond;  
The beryl, the onyx and the jasper;  
The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald;  
And the gold, the workmanship of your [e]settings and  
[f]sockets,  
Was in you.***

***On the day that you were created  
They were prepared.***

**14**

***“You were the anointed cherub who [g]covers,  
And I placed you there.***

***You were on the holy mountain of God;  
You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.***

**15**

***“You were blameless in your ways  
From the day you were created  
Until unrighteousness was found in you.***

And that unrighteousness came as Satan was filled with pride....



Listen to Isaiah 14:12-15...

**12**

***“How you have fallen from heaven,  
O [g]star of the morning, son of the dawn!  
You have been cut down to the earth,  
You who have weakened the nations!***

**13**

***“But you said in your heart,  
‘I will ascend to heaven;  
I will raise my throne above the stars of God,  
And I will sit on the mount of assembly  
In the recesses of the north.***

**14**

***‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;  
I will make myself like the Most High.’***

**15**

***“Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol,  
To the recesses of the pit.***

The fall of Satan from heaven was more like the push of Satan out of heaven...

As he raised his heart above God, the Lord would not tolerate that. so he was cast out of heaven as a holy angel...

Yet in the process of his dismissal, he pulled a third of other heavenly angels with him...

Not content to go quietly on his way, he recruited help for the express purpose of enlisting help to continue to wage his war against God...

Now, Satan only got a third of the angels; God retained twice as much in the two-thirds that stayed...

But the battle line was drawn and war on God was declared...

Now we know Satan's first target was the height of God's creation as Satan sets his sights on man...

And he went to the garden of Eden and lured Adam and Eve into sin..

Thinking that he had achieved ultimate victory of separating God from his creation, Satan was probably feeling good about himself...

Until God started passing out curses due to the entry of sin into the world...

And that is when he heard that unsettling words that God would seed the woman to crush the head of the serpent...

In that promise, Satan's heart must have dropped...

Someone was coming to crush his head and restore man's relationship with his people?

This news must have sent him into a frenzy, and it did...

Because he sets his sights on preventing that Savior from coming into the world...

The first thing he did was cause trouble for the nation who was chosen to bring him into the world...

So he set out to make trouble for Israel by sending enemies to try and exterminate them...

The Egyptians and Pharaoh gave it a good shot..

The Philistines and Goliath gave it a good shot...

The Babylonians tried to capture them and carry them out o the land...

Then came the Medes and Persians...

All empowered by Satan in this cosmic unseen war to stop the plans of God...

And Israel kept surviving and passing the next test...

Until eventually it came time to bring forth this Savior through the woman of Israel...

So, the dragon sits and waits as the woman prepares to give birth...

We know this as the Christmas story...

Mary has a miraculous pregnancy, and she and Joseph head to Bethlehem to have this baby...

The baby is born but King Herod sought to kill baby Jesus by slaughtering all the male children 2 years and under in Bethlehem..

Fortunately, Joseph and Mary escaped to Egypt with Jesus..

We see that story as the evil King Herod, but the truth is that Satan was behind that attack...

He was waiting for the birth and using any means necessary to devour Christ...

Herod just happened to be available...

However, Satan's plan failed, but he was deterred...

The story of the life of Christ is more efforts by the dragon to stop the work of Christ...

Jesus was led into the wilderness where Satan tempted him 3 times, but never sinned..

Jesus went to his hometown and preached a message and the people there tried to throw him off a cliff...

We see the angry town people, but Satan was behind the attack to prevent Jesus from going to the cross...

Because you see, Satan couldn't stop the birth, but he had to stop the cross...

The cross is where Satan's head would be bruised...

IT would be the death blow to Satan..

Though he wouldn't die immediately, Jesus' death in the place of sinners would make it possible for people to repair the relationship that Satan had broken in the garden of Eden...

The cross would eliminate any hope that Satan's work would last...

Do you remember in the gospel of Matthew that Jesus began to give the details of the cross to his disciples...

That he would have to go and die in Jerusalem and then be raised 3 days later...

After Jesus finished describing this, Peter took Jesus aside and reused him...

“Nah, that’s not a good plan Jesus..The cross is a bad idea Jesus..”

Do you remember what Jesus said to Peter?

Get behind me Satan.

That’s wasn’t just an insult to Peter.

It was truth..

Satan was tempting Peter to discourage Jesus from the cross...

You see, the dragon’s battle against God and his plans goes on all the time...

It went on in the OT....

It went on in the NT...

It went on to the cross, and though Satan was unsuccessful in stopping the cross and is now under a death sentence, he is still waging war against God..

Now, he fights against the church...

He fights against the gospel of the cross going into the world...

He fights to keep people away from salvation...

He fights to cause Christians to stumble into sin..

The war rages around us today...

In the pews as your hearts battle to obey God or obey Satan...

You don't see it as that...

You see it as something else, yet every decision you make is an act of obedience to God or to Satan....

This is the spiritual war that rages in your heart and in your mind every day all the time...

And Satan will continue to fight to the very end...

He is delusional...

Though the cross spelled his ultimate doom, he still holds on to a false hope that this world can still be his one day..

That bring us to the final two verses of our passage for this morning...

### **III. The Struggle in the End (5-6)**

In verses 5 & 6, John takes us back to the action of Revelation...

John leaves the history of Israel and the history of the dragon to bring us to the relationship between the dragon and the woman at the very end of time...

Verse 5 lets us know that Israel was successful in bringing a Savior into the world...

And not only would this Savior provide a solution to sin, he would one day come to reign upon this earth as the leader of God's government to rule the nations for 1000 years...

Yet, for a while Jesus would be caught up to heaven to wait for that day...

Now as that day nears...

As God prepares the earth to receive her King, the dragon will continue to resist and oppose this plan...

Even as God's judgments rain down upon the earth in the final 7 years before Christ comes to rule the nations, Satan will continue to fight to the end...



And what you see in verse 6 is a picture of where Satan will attack in the final years before the end of his time and the return of Christ...

We will see more of this next week, but to make a long story short, Satan will ramp up his persecution of Israel in the final years of the world...

You see, Satan had very little need to wage war against Israel after the nation brought forth Christ...

They had rejected Christ and still reject him to this day, so they have not been huge targets of Satan...

Most of their sufferings and trouble after the cross were the result of God's discipline of them....

Yet, as the world ends, the Bible is clear that all of Israel alive at the end of time will be saved...

God will save them because He is a God of his Word and he promised to bless Israel...

And that is exactly what he will do even if he does it at the very end of time...

But God's plan to save them means that they will once again be a target for Satan..

So, Israel will have to be protected by God in the final half of the tribulation period...

That is why you see 1,260 days here...

That equals 3.5 years...

Remember, if you have been tracking through the book of Revelation with us, these final 7 years will start with Israel signing a peace treaty with Israel...

So for much of the first 3.5 years of these final 7 years, Israel will be at peace in their land...

Yet, we know from the book of Daniel that the peace will not last, and that the Antichrist will broke his pace treaty with them and go on the attack against them...

This will be the Satan's last stand to go after the people of God in hopes of defeating God as well...

So, God will send the woman, the nation of Israel into the wilderness and protect her for the final 3.5 years of the end...

We will find out where that place may be next week, and we will find out how the dragon will still try to get to her in those final days as well...

For now, we just need to know that she will be protected by God until the very end, which assures her survival and her salvation....

### **Conclusion**

Now, what do these 6 verses of Revelation 12 mean to you?

#### **#1 - The world around you is more than meets the eye.**

If you think the world can be explained with just your five senses, you are making a fatal error..

Yet most people live their whole lives thinking, “seeing is believing.”

Unfortunately, that is not a verse of Scripture but a saying of man...

The Bible says that “faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”

Let me give you an example...

None of you can see gravity right now...

You can only see the effects of gravity...

You can see a pen fall to the floor...

But all of us have faith that gravity exists and that is why we don't climb the Empire State building and then step off...

We know that gravity is there even though we don't see it...

I assure you there is also a world beyond your eyes...

A spiritual world where Satan and his demons wage war on God and his angels...

But also spiritual world where God works through nations like Israel to accomplish his purposes...

**#2 - The war within you is more than you can handle.**

The greatest lie of all of human history is that lie that you have things under control..

That is simply not the case for any of us, and it never has been the case at any point in your life...

When you were born, you had the desire to sin and you have sinned uncontrollably since a young age..

You may think you reigned your sin in at times, but all you did was find another sin to control...

The human heart was broken in the fall of Adam and Eve, and it has been passed down to everyone who was a descendant of them...

Which in case you wondered included every single person who has ever been born..

The story of the broken human heart and the depravity of man is not the cute picture of a devil on one shoulder and an angel on the other shoulder..

The story of the fallen human heart is the domination of Satan's influence in your life..

Your sin may look better than your neighbors but it still an abomination in the sight of a holy God...

And Satan literally wins the battle for the human heart in everyone who is not in Christ...

In a very real sense, there is no godly influence in the heart of anyone who isn't saved..

There really is no war either..

You are a captive of your your own evil heart and desires and do as Satan pleases..

That is the the gospel is the power of God to break Satan's grip on you...

And what is the promise of the gospel?

It gives you a new heart...

It removes the heart of evil that is only able to respond to the commands of Satan, and in comes a new heart that is filled with the Holy Spirit that can respond to the commands of God..

But not only is their victory over evil now, the gospel is the promise of victory for eternity..

When a person repents of their sin and trusts in Christ, he gets a new heart with new desires but also get the forgiveness of every sin he has committed or ever will commit...

The power of the gospel is to power to change you now but also change your future forever...

If you have never repented and trusted in the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, today is that day...

Now is that time..

What I just read here is not science fiction or the words of man..

God who has already written the future has also revealed it to us in the book of Revelation...

This is not a movie about a dragon and a woman and a son...

God has simply pulled back the veil on the reality that you think you know so well and reminded you of how you little you know and see...

And he pulls back the veil not to frighten you but to remind you that He has it all under control...

You should be reminded that you don't have it under control and you should be compelled to run to the gospel, repent of your sins and trust in Christ..

We may not be able to see everything around us, but God has given us a clear view of what we need to do...

And that is to admit your defeat and lack of control and put your trust in Christ who has full control of today and the rest of time...

Let us pray...

