

**Revelation 12: 7-12; "War broke out in heaven", Sermon # 86 in the series - "The Faithful and True Witness", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on February 24th, 2008, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

The book of Revelation, as we have been seeing, is a book full of word pictures and symbols which relate to the Church of Jesus Christ and her mission to preach the gospel to every creature. It is the story of the battles of the Church, to see the gospel conquer among the nations. It is the story of the progress of Christ's kingdom, from the days when John lived until the end of the world. It is the true story of how, in every period of Church history, that oppositions were raised up to the legitimate rule of Jesus Christ, by his arch enemy Satan. These oppositions have taken different forms during each of the 3 periods of time which this book describes as coming before the Millennium when the kingdoms of this world shall indeed become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. And even at the end of the Millennium, Satan's malignant opposition will once more be seen. But Christ and His Church will triumph over all. I have said to you before, that Christ is most certainly ruling and reigning in heaven presently. He has received all power and authority in heaven and earth. And He has given His Church the great commission to "go and make disciples of all the nations." Her commission stands until the end of the world and encompasses all of Church history. But this book is written to show us how Christ's Church comes to rule and reign spiritually upon the earth. That spiritual reign has not taken place yet, but it is coming, and every generation leading up to it has an important part to play. The reason that it is important to study the book of Revelation is so that we, as the Church of Jesus Christ, can perceive the overview of what God intends to do in the history of the Church, so that each of us can be better equipped to be faithful and true witnesses to him whether it means that we die by persecution, or whether we live taking our stand against false doctrine and false authorities in the church. In our own times and in our own country we are coming to understand that the World and our own flesh are just as great enemies to our spiritual well-being, sometimes even more than Satan himself. But all of this is addressed in this wonderful book. It is a book for every generation of Christians since the time that it was written, until the end of the world.

Here in Revelation 12, we stand at the entrance to the 3rd time period of Church history; a time where Satan was forced to change his strategy against the Church drastically, because of a war which took place in heaven. The last time that I spoke to you from this book I attempted to explain to you the 3 great signs which appeared in heaven; the sign of a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a garland of twelve stars on her head. The sign of a great fiery red dragon who stood before the woman who was ready to give birth to a child, the dragon being ready to devour the child; and the sign of the woman fleeing into the Wilderness where she had a place prepared for her by God. I cannot here repeat

that sermon, but I will relate to you the meaning of these signs briefly, once again. The woman clothed with the sun is the Church of Jesus Christ. The Church is clothed with Christ who is the Sun of Righteousness who has arisen upon the nations, with the healing of the gospel in His wings. The woman is ready to give birth to the Christ of the gospel, to the nations, but the great fiery dragon was standing ready to devour this mystical Christ child as soon as He was born. The dragon wanted to devour our Christ, and everyone who would be converted by receiving Him and believing in Him for salvation. Both the gospel itself and those converted by that gospel, Satan tried to destroy in the 1st time period of Church history by the persecutions of at least 10 Emperors of the Pagan Roman empire. This did not succeed even though multitudes of Christians were condemned to death for their faith. The Woman's Child was "caught up to God and His throne." The gospel went forward and the church was raised to a higher more public witness in Constantine's day. Not in God's mind. In His mind she could be raised no higher, in His Holy esteem. She had suffered greatly because of her public testimony for Christ. But from the standpoint of the Church's being not only being accepted, but promoted by the government of the Roman Empire; she was in a heavenly state in an earthly sense.

But this did not mean that all was well. In the second time period of Church history, Constantine succeeded to the Imperial throne of Rome; Church and State were united. This seemed to be the best of situations for the Church. There came an important temporary earthly victory for the Church, in that the mass killings of Christians stopped. But instead of open persecution, Satan's strategy was to introduce destructive heresies into the minds of many who claimed to be true ministers. He would also try to corrupt them with money, power, and position. This was seen under the 1st-4th trumpets in Chapter 8. Then came the rise of what we are beginning to study in more depth now; the rise of the Antichristian powers of the Roman Catholic Papal system and the false religion of Mohammedanism which took over not only the Old Roman Empire, but has also had a deadly spiritual influence like plagues among many of the nations of the earth. The primary problem, and this is the problem which we are beginning to look at in this chapter; is the problem of a false Christianity, a substitute introduced by Satan, in the place of the true. This has indeed been the greatest hindrance to the gospel being able to go forward among the nations of the world. It is still very much in existence in this day. God has most certainly had His Elect among all the nations, and will continue to call people from every tribe, tongue, and people, even though these grave hindrances exist. But it has been the hope and prayer of God's people in every generation since their rise, that these systems which so dishonor God and take people's souls to hell, would be destroyed. This is the story of the 3rd time period of Church history. Here in these verses that I have read to you, is a short overview of that story. What I want to do with the remainder of our time is to attempt to interpret this war in heaven by asking certain questions of the text. 1st - Where is this war taking place which is

described for us in verse 7, and who are the combatants? 2ndly- What was the outcome of this war and what is to be the response of God's people to it?

**1st- Where is this war taking place which is described for us here in verse 7, and who are the combatants?**

It says, "And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon: and the dragon and his angels fought." We must understand that spiritual warfare is something that takes place literally in the heavenly places. It involves real angels and real devils who are battling with one another in relation to God's overarching purpose, which is to see His Son have the pre-eminence in the hearts of His Elect people and for Him to exercise His rule spiritually through his Church here upon the earth. The battles of the angels, who are in the heavenly realm, in the spiritual dimension, are directly related to the spiritual battles of Christ's saints upon the earth. The angels have a grand captain and champion. His name in our text is Michael. The angels of darkness have their captain and leader as well. He is that "serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan." Christ's saints are "more than conquerors through Him who loves them". The victory of Christ's Church over the evil one is always seen in each and every true believer in Jesus Christ because of the complete, full, and free salvation which has been accomplished by Christ. He faithfully applies this salvation to them by the Holy Spirit in accordance with God's eternal purpose. The progress of the Church of Christ among the nations, however, may see one generation apparently accomplish very little in terms of forwarding Christ's cause and kingdom, and another generation may see very much. There are times of advance and times of regression; times where the Church languishes and is lazy and neglectful of her duties in regard to holiness and the spread of truth. And then there are times when she is awakened and rises up to fulfill those duties. This does not mean that there are not certain men who are faithful in a generation which may be lax. On the contrary; if you study Church History you can see that there have been many men who "shone like lights" in the midst of a generation where many other Christians did not take a decided stand. But behind the scenes, there are angelic battles of immense proportions taking place. We want to look for a few minutes at the role of the angels in relation to the triumph of God's people over the forces of darkness.

Who is this Michael who is mentioned in verse 7? Is He the Lord Jesus Christ or is he the created arch-angel of God? Because I had a hard time discerning this I felt that I must study the subject. I want to take you with me in my study. You can see an Old testament sample of the mention of his name if you will turn over to Daniel Chapter 10. Here in this chapter, Daniel has been fasting and mourning for three whole weeks. He went down to the river Tigris with some companions to have some devotions with them there. And when he lifted up his eyes, he had a vision of Jesus Christ. Christ's name is not mentioned, of course, but the description is made of "a certain man clothed in linen." It is very much like the description which we find of our Lord mentioned in Revelation 1: 14 and 15 "His

waist was girded with gold of Uphaz!" "His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude." Daniel was so overcome by the vision that his strength turned to frailty in him. In verse 9 it says, "Yet I heard the sound of his words; and while I heard the sound of his words I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground." "Suddenly, a hand touched me." I do not believe that it was Christ who touched Daniel. I believe that it was the angel Gabriel who had come to him at the bidding of Christ, even as he had in Chapter 8, verse 16. It was the vision of Christ that caused Daniel to fall on his face to the ground and to feel weak and unable to face him. But to the angel Gabriel was given the authority and power by the pre-incarnate Christ to cause Daniel to stand upright, and to be able to listen to the words of the prophecy. Verse 18 of chapter 6 says, "Now, as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me, and stood me upright."

Gabriel says to him in verse 12 of chapter 10, "Do not fear Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words." "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia." The kings of Persia were the literal kings of that world monarchy under whose authority Daniel was. There was first Darius the Mede; but then came Cyrus the Persian. But the princes mentioned appear to be angelic beings; Michael, and an evil angelic being called the prince of Persia. The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood Gabriel 21 days, the number of the days that Daniel had been fasting, but Michael came to help him, and then this good message comes to Daniel. There must indeed be angelic conflicts which take place in the spiritual realm in relation to the progress of truth and righteousness being lived out by God's people. It was true then, and it is also true now, in our days. The words of Gabriel are significant in verse 12 of Chapter 10 of Daniel. "Then he said to me, 'Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set to humble your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.'" Here is an angel sent to Daniel because of His prayers and because he humbled himself. Let us learn the lessons that the text teaches us. Gabriel goes on; "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty one days; and behold Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia." Evidently Daniel's 21 day time of humbling himself took place in the transition of government between Darius and Cyrus; or perhaps between Cyrus and his son Cambyses. But whichever; it was an extremely important transition for the people of God. It would mean, if God was favorable, their coming out of their captivity and going back to their land to rebuild their temple. Great prospects indeed!

But is it not evident that Michael is "one of the chief princes?" How could Gabriel say this of the pre-incarnate Son of God, who is not one among many of great angels but indeed, the Angel of the Lord? Perhaps the wording of verse 13, as John Gill suggests, could be "one", or "the first of the chief Princes," superior to angels, in nature, name, and office; he came to help Gabriel, not as a fellow creature, but as the Lord of hosts; not as a fellow soldier, but as General of the armies in heaven and earth, as superior to him in wisdom and strength; and he helped him by giving him fresh counsels, order, and instructions. This may indeed be the case, for in Daniel 12: 1 it says of him, "At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people...." It is only Michael alone who is mentioned as being the one who "watches over the Jewish people." But are not all angels called "heavenly watchers"? (Daniel 4: 13, 17, and 23) Yes they are; but the "decree of the watchers" in those verses may only extend in its reference only as far as the Divine Trinity and not to any holy created angel. If this is the case, the Son of God is the holy watcher, watching over Nebuchadnezzar to correct him for his pride. And in verses 20 and 21 of Chapter 10, Gabriel says to Daniel, "Do you know why I have come to you?" "And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come." "But I will tell you what is noted in the Scripture of Truth." "No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince."

Why is only Michael mentioned and not the myriads of other holy angels which surround the throne of God in heaven? Why only Michael, when any one of these holy angels would be ready to help in the fight? It is because all of our salvation was to rest squarely upon the shoulders of the one who would become the Lord Jesus Christ in His incarnation, coming into this fallen world as a man, some hundreds of years after these incidents in Daniel took place. It was Michael the arch-angel who disputed with the body of Moses, Jude tells us, in the 9th verse of his epistle. Only Christ could dispute with the Devil and win in such a case. There are no doubt angels and arch-angels. Angels of different orders and regiments in the armies of heaven. But there is only one arch-angel Michael; one Angel of the Lord to rule them all. And that is our Lord Jesus Christ. After the children of Israel came out of their 40 years of their wilderness wanderings, and were entering in to take the Promised Land, it says in Joshua 5: 13, "And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold , a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand." "And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?" "So He said, 'No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." "And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, 'What does my Lord say to His servant?" "Then the Commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, 'Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy." "And Joshua did so." I would suggest to you that this Arch-angel, this angel over all angels, this Commander of the Lord's army, is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ in pre-incarnate form. His name to the angels is Michael. Michael means, "Who is as

God?" And who is as God except the Lord Jesus Christ? He is the "Prince of the Kings of the earth", the Prince of life who has laid down His life in the battle for us. **2ndly, and very briefly- What was the outcome of this war and what was the response of the Saints?** (Verse 8-12)

The battle which Michael and his angels fought, which is mentioned in our text, was with the dragon; the persecuting strategy of Satan through the Roman emperors. This strategy could only have been changed if Christ Himself, in conjunction with the decrees of the Triune God, would make it change. And He and his angels did. The "heaven" of our text is the heaven which Satan had carved out for himself upon the earth, in and through his evil influences upon the minds of the Emperors who ruled over the Roman Empire in the 1st time period of Church History. His "heaven" is the idolatry of false worship being given to him, and the persecution of Christ's Church by the Emperors. But we should also understand that this "heaven" is also connected to, and not above the actual heaven of God's purposes and plans. This combination of Satan's mind working together with the Roman Emperor's promotion of false and idolatrous worship is the dragon spoken of as being a "sign in heaven". There was no war in this "heaven" of Satan's until Michael and his angels came and kicked the Devil and his angels out of it. Satan ruled over the Church in an earthly sense, in Tyrannical persecution, over many generations until Constantine came to power. But now he was forced to leave. The Devil was "cast to the earth." Now he would be forced to a different strategy and crawl upon the earth rather than rule from his "heaven". We shall see in the coming sermons what that strategy was and what it is today. The response of the saints of that day was loud and glad rejoicing. "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." This voice was heard in the heaven of heavens where the triumphant spirits of the saints of the first and second time periods of Church history had come to reside. And the voice was heard throughout the Roman Empire of that day that the devil had been cast out of his heaven of being able to work through the Emperors, those sons of disobedience, who had tried to rid the world of Christianity and failed. We will look more at this when I preach to you from these verses the next time. But will you not rejoice loudly with all of those saints, as you realize the greatness of what Christ and His holy angels do, so that we can overcome the evil one?