

Lesson 28

Last week we began Chapter 12, and in verse 1 we saw a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and with a crown of twelve stars on her head. In verse 2, we saw that she was with child, and in verses 3-4, a great red dragon appeared and stood before the woman waiting to devour her child as soon as he was born.

The woman depicts the faithful people of God under the old covenant, from whom the Messiah (the child) came in the flesh. The dragon is Satan, or more particularly, Satan using the Roman Empire as a weapon against the church.

In verse 5, the child will be born. Who will win? Does a newborn baby stand any chance at all against a great red dragon? Most would say no — but things are not what they seem!

Revelation 12:5-6

5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.
6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

We find in these verses conclusive evidence that this child is Jesus. Verse 5 says that this child was to rule all the nations with a rod of iron. Recall Psalm 2.

Psalm 2:9 — Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Also, recall Revelation 2.

Revelation 2:26-27 — And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give

power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

Later in Revelation 19, we will read:

Revelation 19:15 — *And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*

We already knew that this child is Jesus, but now in verse 5 we really know it! There is no doubt at all in verse 5.

Before the dragon can devour him, the child is caught up to God and to his throne. Here we see the ascension of Christ back to his father's throne in heaven as recorded in Acts 1:9. The ascension in Act 1 was prophesied in Daniel 7.

Daniel 7:13-14 — *I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*

That ascension is what we are seeing here in verse 5. Notice in Daniel 7 that the Son of man came to the Ancient of days, and "there was given him" a kingdom. That sequence of events in Daniel 7:13-14 is the same sequence of events we see in Acts 1-2: the ascension in Acts 1 followed by the establishment of the eternal kingdom in Acts 2.

On this earth, Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. On this earth, Jesus was tempted by Satan, yet without sin. On this earth, Jesus was put to death by wicked Roman hands. But Jesus rose from the dead, Jesus defeated Satan, and Jesus ascended back to heaven, forever out of Satan's grasp. Do you think that's a message the first century church needed to hear? I do.

Satan failed to defeat Jesus when Jesus was the most vulnerable, while he was made in the likeness of men and found in fashion as a man (Philippians 2:7-

8). Satan certainly won't fair any better after Jesus has ascended to rule the universe from the right hand of God the father in heaven!

Before we read any further, we know what God's message to the church is going to be! Just as these Christians had followed the example of Christ in their suffering, they would also follow the example of Christ in ascending to heaven. They, too, would escape the clutches of this great red dragon.

One last point about verse 5 — when we see the ascension of Jesus in verse 5, we know that we have now moved from the old covenant to the new covenant. That transition occurred at the cross, and the cross occurred prior to the ascension. What that tells us is that the woman who depicted God's faithful people under the old covenant in verse 1 now depicts God's faithful people under the new covenant. This woman now depicts the church!

What happens next? Verse 6 tells us that the woman flees into the wilderness to a place prepared by God. We are reminded of Moses fleeing from Pharaoh into the wilderness. We are reminded of the Israelites fleeing from Egypt into the wilderness. We are reminded of Elijah fleeing from Ahab and Jezebel into the wilderness. We are reminded of Mary and Joseph fleeing from King Herod into the wilderness. Here we see the church fleeing into the wilderness.

How long does this sojourn in the wilderness last? Verse 6 tells us that the woman is in the wilderness for 1260 days, which is 42 months, which is three and a half years. **This book is so beautiful when we understand the symbols! Those who take these numbers literally are missing so much!**

The church is figuratively shown as being in the wilderness for three and a half years! That symbol of a broken seven tells us that this wilderness experience is not going to be permanent. What God does to Rome is a perfect seven; what Rome does to the church is just a broken seven.

And verse 6 tells us something else about this time in the wilderness for the woman — verse 6 tells us that God nourishes and sustains her there. God is assuring his people that although they are being persecuted by Rome and although Jesus is no longer with them in person, that situation will not last forever. But while it does last, God will sustain them and protect them and nourish them. Someday that persecution will end, and someday they will be with their Savior, forever out of the reach of the great red dragon.

We are reminded of the exodus from Egypt.

Ezekiel 29:3** — Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, **the great

dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself.

God's people also fled into the wilderness to escape that great dragon, and, as here, God sustained and nourished his people while they were in the wilderness.

For those keeping count, this is the third time and the third different way that this same message has been delivered to the readers of this book!

First, the city of God will be trampled under foot for three and a half years, but the church will be protected.

Second, two witnesses will prophecy for three and a half years and then be killed by the beast, but after three and a half days they will come back to life and ascend to heaven.

Third, a woman will be forced to flee into the wilderness for three and a half years, yet she will find there a place of nourishment and protection.

One of the more popular approaches to the book of Revelation is the historical approach. We talked about several big problems with that approach in our introduction, but we can see one of those big problems right here. The historical approach would taken each of these three descriptions and apply them to different historical events on the timeline of church history — but they are all describing the same thing! They are not separate events. Instead, God is showing us the same thing and giving us the same message from many different perspectives.

Revelation 12:7-9

7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, 8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast

out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

“And there was war in heaven.” Those six words have caused no end of commentary and controversy! How are we to understand them?

Let’s start with a simple question: is this a **literal** war in heaven? Many say yes, but in response to the question “is this a literal war in heaven,” I would respond with two other questions: **How could it be, and why should it be?**

Remember one of our key interpretive rules: difficult verses in the Bible (such as verse 7) should be interpreted in view of easy to understand verses in the Bible. Here is one such easy to understand verse:

John 12:31-33 — Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.

Satan was defeated and cast out at the cross. That was the **literal** defeat of Satan. Yes, the church’s triumph over Rome would also be a defeat for Satan and for his plans — and I believe we are **figuratively** seeing that defeat here — but that defeat of Satan’s plans to destroy the church through Rome came after the complete defeat of Satan at the cross.

Oh, but how could Satan be defeated and yet still be around causing trouble and giving orders? Picture Adolf Hitler in his bunker as the Allied tanks rolled into Berlin. Adolf had already been defeated, but he was still barking commands. That is Satan’s situation after the cross. The Allied tanks are right outside Satan’s door!

Satan and death are in a similar situation. Paul told Timothy that Jesus “hath abolished death” (past tense), but Paul also told the Corinthians that death remains as the last enemy that “shall be destroyed.” How do we reconcile that? In the same way that we reconcile the similar verses about Satan — Jesus defeated Satan and death at the cross and at his resurrection and ascension. Yes, Satan and death continue on, but they are **defeated enemies**. The war against them is over! Jesus took care of that for us long ago.

But if that is true, then why do we see a war here in verse 7? How can the war be over when we see a war right here? Simple — the war that was fought and won at the cross was the **literal** war; this war in verse 7 is a **figurative** war.

How do we know that for sure? We know that for sure because of who is fighting this war in verse 7 — Michael and his angels. The literal war against Satan and against sin and death was not fought by any angel, but was fought and won by the Son of God! Jesus did not need any help from Michael or any angel to win that war.

Hebrews 2:14 — *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, **he also himself** likewise took part of the same; that through death **he** might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.*

1 John 3:8 — *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that **he** might destroy the works of the devil.*

That is something Jesus did all by himself. That is not what we are seeing here in verse 7. Jesus is not fighting the war in verse 7. Instead, that war is being fought by Michael (who is an archangel, Jude 9) and his angels.

Okay, so this war is not the literal war fought by Jesus at the cross. But why couldn't this war be some other literal war fought by Michael and his angels? Because this war in verse 7, like everything else we have been seeing, is figurative. There is no literal woman clothed with the sun; she is a figure for God's people. There is no literal great red dragon; the dragon is a figure for Satan. The 1260 days in verse 6 is not literal; it is a figure for a temporary persecution.

But the child is a literal child, right? No. The child is a *figure* for Christ. How do we know that? Because in verse 5 it is the *child* who ascends to the Father. When Jesus ascended in Acts 1 he was no longer a child.

But Michael is literal in verse 7, right? I think not. I think as we will see in just a moment these fighting angels in verse 7 are being used as a figure for someone else. But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

What is the point of this figurative war in heaven? Why is it being shown to us here? Well, what just happened in the prior verses? The faithful people of God had just given birth to the promised king, that king had just ascended into heaven, and the church had just fled into the wilderness for 1260 days (three and a half years) to be nourished and sustained by God.

The context and the time frame suggest that that wilderness period was the period of Roman persecution that followed Christ's ascension. What was hap-

pening in heaven during that time of persecution? That is what verses 7-9 are here to tell us about.

So what was happening in heaven while God's people were being persecuted on earth? What was happening in heaven was a war — but what kind of war? Was it a literal war in heaven, like some sort of scene from a Lord of the Rings movie with elves replaced by angels? No. This war was not a physical war; this war was a spiritual war. What spiritual war was going on during the Roman persecutions?

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 — *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For **the weapons of our warfare** are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.*

Ephesians 6:11-12 — *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

1 Timothy 6:12 — *Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.*

The spiritual battle that was occurring during the persecution was the battle in the heart of every Christian — it was the good fight of faith. Would the Christians remain faithful to Christ, or would they compromise with Rome and fight *with* rather than *against* the great dragon? That was the fight that was going on. It was not the fight of the cross — Jesus had already won that fight. We just saw the ascension in verse 5! This fight in verse 7 is the fight of the faithful to remain faithful unto death.

How does God view that good fight of faith? What does that fight look like from God's perspective? Verse 7 shows us! That fight is like a war in heaven! God

sees that fight like a war in which Satan is trying to snatch souls away from God in heaven — and isn't that exactly what it is? Isn't that exactly what Satan is trying to do?

Is that how we see our own spiritual battles? Is that how we see our own struggles and the struggles of our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ? If not, then we are not seeing those fights correctly. We all have our great battles with Satan, and those great battles often would not look like much of a battle to an outside observer. But, **things are not what they seem! God is showing us right here how we should view our spiritual battles!**

But if this war in heaven is a spiritual battle being fought by Christians, then why is this a war in heaven (rather than on earth) and why does verse 7 show us Michael and his angels (rather than Christians) fighting against the dragon?

We know the answer to the first question. Throughout this book, God's people have been pictured as being in heaven (even those still physically on the earth), while the Romans have repeatedly been referred to as those who dwell upon the earth. As far as this book is concerned, God's people are already spiritually safe in heaven, so where else would see them fighting a battle?

But what about the second question? Why do we see angels rather than Christians fighting the battle?

The love of God for his people is really on display in these verses. God loves his church, and this book is intended to provide comfort to the persecuted Christians. Why does God show angels doing the fighting? I think he does that to convey an important truth that we all need to hear — **God is on our side!** We don't have to struggle alone! God wants us to win, and God has done everything possible to equip us for that battle. He has withheld nothing from us, not even his only Son.

***Romans 8:31-32** — What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? **He that spared not his own Son**, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

If God be for us, who can be against us! **And God is for us!** That is the message of these beautiful verses! We are not in this alone!

***Ephesians 1:3** — Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings **in heavenly places** in Christ.*

Yes, Christians are fighting the good fight of faith, but we are not fighting alone. That is the beautiful message of verse 7.

What is the result of this spiritual battle? Is Satan's assault on the church successful? Is Satan able to turn all of the faithful away from God? No. Satan's assault is not successful. Verse 8 tells us that he prevailed not. There was no place for him in heaven, so he and his evil cohorts were cast out.

What event does this casting out depict? Is this a flashback? Is this the original fall of Satan? No. The timing is wrong for that. Whatever this casting out is, it is happening after the ascension of Christ, and it is happening soon after this book was written (1:1, 1:3, 22:6, 22:10). We have not left our time frame or our context in these verses; we are still looking at the conflict between Rome and the church. What we see here is Satan's defeat as to his attack against the church using the Roman empire.

But is this casting down in verse 9 really describing a spiritual battle being waged by Christians against Satan? What did we read just a moment ago from 2 Corinthians 10:3-5?

*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the **pulling down** of strong holds;) **Casting down** imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*

Pulling down? Casting down? Yes, we are looking here in verses 7-9 at a *spiritual* battle, and we (not the angels) are the ones who are *literally* casting down every high thing (including Satan) that exalts itself against God. We do that when we remain faithful to God.

So did no one fall away? We know that *some* fell away. We saw that in Revelation 2-3 with regard to Christians, and we saw that in verse 4 of this chapter with regard to some who fell away prior to the birth of Christ and were no longer faithfully awaiting their promised Messiah. But not all fell away — the church continued. Satan wanted to destroy the church, but Satan prevailed not!

Verse 9 confirms that this great red dragon is Satan, the ancient serpent from the Garden. It was through this serpent's deceptions that sin entered the world, and he has been an active enemy of God and of man ever since. He is

the devil or *diabolos*, which means accuser or slanderer. And he is Satan or *satanas*, which means adversary or opponent.

Verse 9 also describes Satan as the deceiver of the whole world. Paul told us in 1 Timothy 2:14 that it was by deception that the world was plunged into sin. In John 8:44, Jesus said of Satan, “He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” In fact, the first recorded words of Satan in the Bible contained a lie.

Genesis 3:1-4 — Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.

God gave Eve a command, and Satan convinced her to do the very opposite. God told Eve a fact, and Satan convinced Eve that the opposite was true.

Satan’s method of operation has not changed one bit! Why should Satan change, when what he does works so well? God tells us that those who believe and are baptized shall be saved. And what does Satan say? He says that those who believe and are saved shall be baptized. **A small twist — but a deadly one!** Satan delights in twisting God’s word and then telling people, “Ye shall not surely die.” Satan is a deceiver! We must not be “ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11).

Revelation 12:10-11

10 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. 11 And 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.

We saw a verse in the previous chapter that is very similar to verse 10.

Revelation 11:15 — The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

As we saw before with this earlier verse, the statement here in verse 10 does not mark the beginning of God's kingdom or of Christ's authority. Instead, verse 10 describes a public reaffirmation of the kingdom of God and the power of Christ in the judgment of Rome.

This view is confirmed by the second half of verse 10, which explains *why* "is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ." The reason those things have occurred is that "the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night."

Who was that accuser? That accuser was Satan, or more specifically, Satan using and speaking through the Roman empire.

We talked about these accusations when we looked at Revelation 2-3. (Remember that those two chapters at the beginning of the book provide the all-important context for the visions we see in the remainder of the book.) Christians in Roman days were accused of all sorts of terrible crimes, including cannibalism and incest. Tacitus accused the Christians of having a "hatred of the human race." (That accusation sounds familiar — I think I saw it repeated recently in the *New York Times*!) Nero accused the Christians of burning down the city of Rome. Why did Rome bother making an accusation? Because as bad as Rome was, it remained a nation with laws and certain legal protections. And so, for most persecuted Christians, their persecution began with an accusation. Many times those accusations were false (such as cannibalism and arson), but sometimes they were true (such as refusing to offer incense to Caesar).

Verse 10 tells us two important things about those accusations. First, Satan was behind them. And second, those accusations were ultimately not success-

ful because the accuser, rather than the accused, was the one who was cast down. This casting down in verse 10 is the same casting out that we saw in verse 9.

How was Satan cast down? How was Rome, Satan's powerful tool, defeated? How was the church victorious? How were the faithful people of God delivered? Was it a physical deliverance and a physical defeat? Was Rome destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah? Were the Christians protected from physical suffering like Daniel and his three friends?

We answered those questions a moment ago when we looked at verse 9, and we answered them earlier in our study as well. It is what we have been saying all along. The deliverance of the church was not a physical deliverance, and the judgment of Rome was not a physical judgment. Instead, the deliverance was spiritual, and the judgement was spiritual. The war in heaven that we saw in verse 7 was the war to remain faithful; it was the good fight of faith.

But how do we know that for sure? Two words: verse 11!

Revelation 12:11 — And 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.

Verse 11 is one of the most important verses in the entire book of Revelation! Verse 11 confirms that everything we just said about verses 7-10 is true. Verse 11 confirms that the war in verse 7 is not a literal war. Verse 11 confirms that the war in verse 7 is the war that was fought in the heart of every Christian struggling to remain faithful during the Roman onslaught. Verse 11 confirms that the great struggle we see throughout this entire book is a spiritual struggle, and that the promised deliverance is a spiritual deliverance. How could Rome have been judged in the first century and yet continue to exist for centuries after this book was written? Verse 11 answers that question.

Verse 11 is one of the most important verses in this book!

How did the Christians overcome Satan? How did the that small ragtag bunch of Christians, many slaves, overcome the mighty Roman empire? The answer to those questions that we find in verse 11 is **death**. The Christians overcame Satan and Rome through death. **Whose death?** Verse 11 gives us two answers to that question. First, the church overcame Rome through the death of Christ ("the blood of the Lamb" in verse 11), and second, the Christians overcame Rome through their own deaths ("they loved not their lives unto the death" in verse 11).

Christianity is filled with paradoxes, but none is more powerful than the paradox in Luke 9:24 — “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.” **The pathway to life is death!** Isn't that what Jesus told us?

*John 12:24-25 — Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: **but if it die**, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*

Read that last sentence again and compare it with verse 11. John 12: “He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal,” and then verse 11: “they loved not their lives unto the death.”

You mean that Satan was defeated by the death of those he was trying to kill? That doesn't sound like much of a defeat! **Yes, but things are not what they seem!** Satan was defeated by the death of Christ on that cross, and Satan is defeated again when Christ's servants follow the example of their Master by being faithful unto death. The death of Jesus was a defeat—but not for Jesus. Likewise the death of a faithful Christian is a defeat — but not for that faithful Christian. It is Satan who suffers the defeat. It is Satan who is cast down.

The greatest defeat of Satan occurs when a faithful child of God dies. Why? Because that faithful child of God has forever escaped the clutches of that great red dragon!

And the greatest victory for Satan? What is that? Satan's greatest victory and greatest delight comes when he causes one of God's children to fall — be it either a Christian who falls away from grace or a physical child who grows up in this sin-soaked world never having obeyed the gospel of Christ. That puts a smile on Satan's face.

And us? How do we react when the faithful fall? Nothing on this earth should sadden us as much as that. How can we read these verses and reach any other conclusion?

Noice that verse 11 mentions the blood of the Lamb. Satan was defeated by that blood. It was the blood of Christ that provided the forgiveness of sins that took the faithful forever out of Satan's clutches. It was that blood that made Satan's accusations of no effect.

There is power, power, wonder-working power

In the blood of the Lamb
 There is power, power, wonder-working power
 In the precious blood of the Lamb!

The next time you sing *Power in the Blood*, think of verse 11! That blood defeated the most powerful earthly kingdom the world has ever known!

Oh, but this spiritual view can't be right. The great battle is coming! The Anti-christ, who is now living somewhere in Europe, will array his great forces in the Holy Land. He will roll out the ballistic missiles and Cobra helicopters of unrighteousness! Right? Wrong! **That sort of thing is the complete opposite of what verse 11 is teaching us.** In fact, that sort of thing is the complete opposite of what the entire Bible is teaching us. Are our weapons carnal or are they not? Do we war after the flesh or do we not war after the flesh?

2 Corinthians 10:3-4 — For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.

You would really have to work hard to misunderstand that verse! “We do not war after the flesh.” “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.” That’s was Paul said, and that’s what verse 11 is saying. Why do so many commentaries on Revelation say the exact opposite?

Verse 11 is a reminder that this book of comfort and assurance is not promising a **physical** deliverance from the clutches of Rome. Instead, God is promising a **spiritual** deliverance from the power behind Rome. And likewise, God is not promising here to **physically** destroy Rome. Instead, the judgment of Rome is a **spiritual** judgment, which is much worse.

Have we seen anything like this elsewhere in the Bible? Yes. We saw something very similar when we studied the judgment of Babylon by God at the hands of the Medes and the Persians. First, let’s look at how that judgment was described by Isaiah, writing about 160 years *before* it happened.

Isaiah 13:17-22 — Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it. Their bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children. And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency, shall be as when

God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.

After reading that vivid description of Babylon's judgment, we might think that the Medes would do to Babylon what the Romans did to Jerusalem — obliterate it — but that is not at all what happened. We have already studied that event. Daniel 5 describes what happened in two short verses:

Daniel 5:30-31 — In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.

The Medes and the Persians took the city of Babylon without firing a shot. The city was not destroyed, and the walls were not torn down. The people were not slaughtered.

But how then can Isaiah 13 be true? Isaiah 13 is not describing at all how things looked from a human perspective. **EXACTLY!** Things are not what they seem! The vivid apocalyptic language in Isaiah 13 is describing how the fall of Babylon looked from God's perspective!

And maybe that gives us the best answer of all to a question we asked all the way back in the introduction — **why does God use apocalyptic language?** Perhaps God uses this type of vivid symbolic language to show us how he sees things, which then tells us how we should see them as well.

From God's perspective the seemingly smallest and most insignificant events in this world (such as the death of a faithful Christian or the birth of a child in a manger) are in reality the most important events in this world, while the events that seem so important to so many (such as celebrity and sports) mean less than nothing in the grand scheme of things. This entire book of Revelation

is calling on God's people to see things as God sees them. Let's resolve to heed that call!

One last point about verse 11 — yes, the church overcame Satan by death, but verse 11 gives **another** way the church overcame Satan: “by the word of their testimony.” That word is the word of God. How do we know that? Because the word of God was their testimony.

***Revelation 6:9** — I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for **the word of God**, and for the testimony which they held.*

***1 Corinthians 2:1-2** — And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you **the testimony of God**. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*

So what is the difference between the word of God and the testimony of God? Paul just answered that question: “**declaring** unto you the testimony of God.” These early Christians were not persecuted for **reading** the Bible in their homes; they were persecuted for **declaring** the word of God in the public square.

But, and here is the crucial point in verse 11, that testimony was one way in which the church overcame Satan. Yes, the word of God is the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17), and yes the word of God is “sharper than any twoedged sword” (Hebrews 4:12), **but that sword won't do much good if we leave it in the scabbard!** If we want to defeat Satan, we need to take that sword out and use it!