

Revelation 12:7-12: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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- [0 : 0 0] Revelation chapter 12 verses 7 to 12. Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting 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.
- And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.
- And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come. For the accuser of the brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.
- And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they love not their lives even unto death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them.
- But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short. Revelation chapter 12 describes a heavenly war.
- [1 : 0 5] It occurs after the male child who was born of the heavenly woman is caught up to God and to his throne. This describes events that are similar to those that are spoken of by Christ in John chapter 12 verses 31 to 32.
- Now is the judgment of this world. Now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.
- It's easy to forget the cosmic and heavenly dimensions of the gospel. And in this passage we see something behind the scenes of what takes place in heaven. The identity of Michael is a key part of interpreting this passage.
- The meaning of the name Michael is who is like God, or he who is like God, perhaps. The first reference that we find to Michael is in the book of Daniel chapter 10, in verse 4 to 14.
- On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was sitting on the bank of the great river, that is the Tigris, I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Euphrates around his waist.
- [2 : 1 0] His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude.
- And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision, but a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves. So I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and no strength was left in me.
- My radiant appearance was fearfully changed, and I retained no strength. Then I heard the sound of his words, and as I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in deep sleep, with my face to the ground.

And behold, a hand touched me, and set me trembling on my hands and knees. And he said to me, O Daniel, man greatly loved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now I have been sent to you.

And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling. Then he said to me, Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words.

[3 : 21] The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days. But Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia, and came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision is for days yet to come.

Michael is mentioned again at the end of that passage in Daniel chapter 10 verse 21, But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth. There is none who contends by my side against these, except Michael, your prince.

And then in Daniel chapter 12 verse 1, Michael, as he appears then in the book of Daniel, seems to be a sort of angelic guardian of Israel, a figure who will play a critical role in the latter days.

A further reference to Michael, this time in the New Testament, is found in Jude verse 9, But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, The Lord rebuke you.

This passage seems to recall Zechariah chapter 3, where it is the angel of the Lord rebuking Satan. Consequently, and I think with good reason, many have identified Michael with the angel of the Lord, and with Christ himself.

[4 : 50] Others have regarded Michael merely as a great archangel, or perhaps as a powerful angel who is personally associated with the Son, a personal assistant to the Son, perhaps in much the same way as Joshua is to Moses.

We might interpret the man of Beryl in Daniel chapter 10 verses 5 to 6 as a description of Michael. I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Euphaz around his waist.

His body was like Beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude.

Reading Daniel 10 in light of this, the vision would be of Michael, and the one who touches Daniel is not the man of Beryl, but the one who is called Michael, who is the man of Beryl, to his aid.

In Revelation chapter 1 verses 12 to 15, we have a description of Christ that should remind us of the man of Beryl, and, if I'm correct in my identification, with the figure of Michael.

[5 : 52] Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.

The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters.

Making sense of the identification of Michael with Christ still leaves us with some questions. There is the problem, for instance, of the shift from the child, who is born of the woman, to Michael.

The dragon is situated in heaven. As a dragon, he is a particularly powerful form of serpent. He has power over the nations. This is suggested by his offering of the nations to Christ in his temptation of Christ in the wilderness.

He is the one who is the deceiver. He misleads and outwits and holds people in darkness. He is the accuser. His power comes from the law and the condemnation that he can bring.

The victory over him is won by the blood of the Lamb, and it is won as the sacrifice of Christ overcomes his work. The sacrifice of Christ opens up a living way to God, an eternal life in fellowship with God, which defeats the power of death and the fear of death that Satan wields.

[8 : 11] It is also won as Christ's intercession, as our eternal high priest, overcomes the accuser's condemnation. This justifies God's people and provides them good standing before God.

The victory in heaven has to be played out on earth too. The devil is cast down to earth with a limited period of time. He has lost the definitive battle, but he can still inflict considerable damage, both personally and through the forces of his minions.

How does the heavenly vantage point offered by Revelation chapter 12 change the way that we consider the work of Christ?

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