

War in Heaven Revelation 12:7-12 The End Times

In my last post, we explored **Revelation 12:1-6** dealing with **The Birth of the Male Child**. In this post, unpack **Revelation 12:7-12, War in Heaven**.

"Next there was a battle in heaven — Mikha'el and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. ⁸ But it was not strong enough to win, so that there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹ The great dragon was thrown out, that ancient serpent, also known as the Devil and HaSatan [the Adversary], the deceiver of the whole world. He was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him. ¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, "Now have come God's victory, power and kingship, and the authority of his Messiah; because the Accuser of our brothers, who accuses them day and night before God, has been thrown out! ¹¹ They defeated him because of the Lamb's blood and because of the message of their witness. Even when facing death they did not cling to life. ¹² "Therefore, rejoice, heaven and you who live there! But woe to you, land and sea, for the Adversary, has come down to you, and he is very angry because he knows that his time is short!" ~ Revelation 12:7-12 (CJB)

War in Heaven

Wow, what is this imagery all about? This conflict between **Mikha'el** and his angels and HaSatan and his fallen angels, like so many events described during this interval, does not follow any chronological order. In this particular battle, we are told that **Mikha'el** and his angels cast the HaSatan out of heaven. HaSatan had already, fallen from his lofty position (Isaiah 14:12), but still had access to the throne of God (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7). But now HaSatan is booted out of heaven entirely and is hurled to the earth. Mikha'el is a warrior angel whose name means **"One who is like God."** It is believed by many that his primary responsibility is that of protector of the nation of Israel.

David H. Stern, in his commentary on this passage, has some fascinating background information for us to digest. ¹

*In traditional Jewish thought, angels are a Christian invention reflecting a departure from pure monotheism. Angels are frequently mentioned in the Tanakh, although **Mikha'el** and **Gavri'el** (Gabriel) are the only ones it identifies by name. Post-Tanakh Judaism developed an elaborate angelology.*

*At Daniel 10:13, after Daniel had fasted three weeks, **Gavri'el** explains his delay in coming: "**The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me for twenty-one days, until Mikha'el, one of the first-ranked angels, came to my aid, and I was no longer needed there with the kings of Persia.**" At Daniel 10:21, **Gavri'el** tells Daniel about "**Mikha'el, your prince**"; and "**your**" is plural - **Mikha'el** is the Jewish people's prince or guardian angel, who fights alongside **Gavri'el** against the angels of Persia and Greece. Daniel 12:1, speaking of the End of Days, adds, "**At that time Mikha'el, the great prince who stands [guard] for the children of your people, will arise; and there will be a period of trouble greater than any which has been from the time nations began until then; but at that time your people—that is, everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.**" (This verse is alluded to at Revelation 20:15 and Matthew 24:21.) Here **Mikha'el** is seen with his heavenly armies, defeating the dragon.*

*The **aggadah** [the legendary and Midrashic material woven about the Tanakh] names many other angels, for example, **Rafa'el** and **'Aza'zel**, referred to in the quotation from 1 Enoch in 2 Kefa 2:4.*

¹ Jewish New Testament Commentary by David H. Stern

Moreover, the tradition expands the roles of **Mikha'el** and **Gavri'el**. According to *Pesikta Rabbati* 46:3, they are two of the four angels surrounding God's throne; but the Talmud states that **Mikha'el** is greater than **Gavri'el** (*B'rakhot* 4b). **Mikha'el** was the angel who called on Avraham not to sacrifice Yitzchak (*Midrash Va-Yosha in A. Jellinek, Beit-HaMidrash* 1:38, referring to Genesis 22:11). According to *Exodus Rabbah* 18:5, it was **Mikha'el** who smote Sennacherib and the Assyrian army (*2 Kings* 19:35); the passage adds that:

"Mikha'el and Samma'el [identified with HaSatan] both stand before the Sh'khinah; HaSatan accuses, while Mikha'el points out Israel's virtues, and when HaSatan wishes to speak again, Mikha'el silences him."

Esther Rabbah 7:12 says it was **Mikha'el** who defended the Jews against each of Haman's accusations. When the Messiah comes, **Mikha'el** and **Gavri'el** will accompany him and will fight the wicked (*Alphabet Midrash of Rabbi Akiva*).

"Next there was a battle in heaven — Mikha'el and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. ⁸ But it was not strong enough to win, so that there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹ The great dragon was thrown out, that ancient serpent, also known as the Devil and HaSatan [the Adversary], the deceiver of the whole world. He was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him. This conflict between **Mikha'el** and the HaSatan is but one more battle in the long line of battles that have been fought in the spirit world. One needs to realize that behind every conflict between people there is a spiritual war that has been going on from the beginning. M. R. DeHaan explains it this way: ²

After man had sinned and God had pronounced the curse and sentence upon the sinner, He turned to the serpent, and through the serpent to the devil, and said: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel (Gen. 3:15). This was the beginning of the conflict, the battle of the ages, in which HaSatan seeks to thwart the purpose of God, set up a false kingdom upon earth, prepare a false church upon the earth and persecute the true believers of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is well to recognize that behind all the wars of men and of nations is the great spiritual battle between sin and righteousness, between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, as described in Genesis 3:15.

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, "Now have come God's victory, power and kingship, and the authority of his Messiah; because the Accuser of our brothers, who accuses them day and night before God, has been thrown out!" ¹¹ They defeated him because of the Lamb's blood and because of the message of their witness. Even when facing death they did not cling to life. ¹²

"Therefore, rejoice, heaven and you who live there! But woe to you, land and sea, for the Adversary has come down to you, and he is very angry, because he knows that his time is short!"

There is definite rejoicing going on in heaven. HaSatan, the accuser of the brethren, is cast down. Even though this battle is still in the future, there is a message worth chronicling for the Messianic Community. The same serpent who accuses the saints in heaven also deceives the nations on earth. It is through HaSatan's deception that the leaders of the nation's band together against **Yeshua** and His people. Believers in every age can expect the world's opposition, but they can always defeat the enemy by being faithful to Yeshua. Note in verse 11 how the saints on earth won the victory over HaSatan.

1. By the blood of the Lamb.
2. By the word of their testimony.
3. And they loved not their lives unto the death (martyrdom).

² A Layman's Commentary on Revelation by Don Jones

As verse 12 closes, HaSatan **knows that his time is short!** Realizing that his days are numbered, he attacks Israel and all other believers with a vengeance.

Special Comparative Note on Chapter 12:7-12³

Historicist Approach:

Historicists don't seem very united on this passage. Elliott refers to heretical persecutors arising from within the church and to the Gothic scourge soon to come. Barnes, however, believes it is referring to the rise of the Papacy.

Preterist Approach:

Preterists seem to think that **Mikha'el** is **Yeshua** Himself and pinpoint this heavenly battle at the time of His atonement and resurrection (cf. John 12:31, Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14-15).

Futurist Approach:

Futurists look to Daniel 12:1ff as the same event described here in the middle of the **Tribulation**. Since he is cast out of heaven, he can no longer accuse the saints there but continues his attack on the **Tribulation** saints on earth.

Idealist Approach:

Idealists view this passage as the same spiritual conflict as depicted in Revelation 12:1-6 (see my last post) from the heavenly perspective. They concur with the **Preterists** view of the timing and symbolism of **Mikha'el**.

In my next post, we will explore **Revelation 12:13-17** dealing with **The Woman Persecuted, But Preserved**.

³ Material in this post is taken from "*Revelation: Four Views, Revised & Updated*" by Steve Gregg. Notations in brackets, if any, are my comments.