

# Pursuing Resilience in Revelation

Falling Darkness, Rising Light

***Revelation 12:7-17***

## Intro

In Chapter 1 of J.R.R. Tolkien's classic, "The Hobbit," we are told the story of a once great city of the Dwarves called Dale. This city is described as having been a magnificent place, blessed beyond measure due to wise leadership and the skillful hands of the Dwarves. All was well until a dragon named Smaug decided that he wanted the riches which the Dwarves had accumulated for himself. According to Tolkien, dragons steal gold from men, elves, and dwarves whenever possible and they guard what they have stolen mercilessly. These dragons don't even enjoy what they have stolen, they take pleasure only in stealing joy from others and hoarding over what is not truly theirs. They do not have the skill nor the creativity to create beautiful things for themselves, and so they take from others. The only real way to reclaim a stolen treasure from a dragon in Tolkien's world, is to kill it.

Perhaps you may wonder what The Hobbit and Middle Earth's dragons have to do with understanding our Scripture passage for today. Much actually. You see, Tolkien was a modern myth writer, but he was also a man with a keen understanding of the Scriptures. Much of his mythical writing was inspired by his understanding of the one myth that is actually true and by that I refer to the story of God which He has revealed to us in His word. It was Tolkien's Christian worldview which gave him the inspiration to write such masterful fiction with a certain ring of truth.

Tolkien knew of the real dragons, and he knew that real dragons are unclean, corrupt thieves who create nothing for themselves either. They only take what belongs to God and to men and like Smaug, they guard what they have stolen with all of their might.

All that Satan possesses has been stolen from others. He stole from Adam and Eve by deceit, he stole from God by tricking Adam and Eve, and he held his throne for centuries through manipulating and bullying everyone around him. But now... things are different. Today we will see that Christ has come and He has defeated this strong man, throwing him down and reclaiming Adam's lost kingdom and treasure for Himself. Not only has Christ won this world back for Himself, but He has won it for all of us who have rejected the Dragon's rule and have overcome through Christ's blood and the word of our testimony.

# Discover

## I. Because Christ ascended, Satan has been thrown down (7-9)

- A. This is the direct fulfillment of God's promise to Eve in Genesis 3. Christ has crushed the head of the serpent.
- B. The immediate result of Christ ascending to His throne, is that Satan was dethroned and cast down to the earth.
  - 1. Satan had lost his place on God's council when he rebelled, but he stole Adam's place through deceit and for millenia Satan had ruled as the uncontested principality of this world through manipulation and deceit.
    - a) As Isaiah 59 says, there was no one among the sons of men who was able to intercede on humanity's behalf. This is because every last one of us had been given over to sin, sold out to Satan by our father Adam but also all too willing and ready to participate in the rebellion against God on our own volition.
  - 2. Christ, being both fully God and fully human in hypostatic union, lived the life Adam was supposed to lead but didn't, died the death we have all earned through sin, rose from the dead thus nullifying death forever, and earned the right to ascend to Adam's vacated throne thus casting Satan down forever.

## II. Because of Christ's victory, His kingdom has come (10-11)

- A. The rise of Christ means the fall of Satan.
  - 1. The dominant narrative of this world is no longer that of Satan. Satan has become yesterday's man and Christ is today's man forever.
  - 2. We are now in a season of salvation, the demonstration of God's kingdom, the rise of light and the fall of darkness.
    - a) Satan, who once had authority to accuse men before God as he did in Job, has fully lost his place and has been replaced finally by the God-man and righteous King Jesus Christ.
- B. Jesus is the truer and better King Joash (2 Kings 8-11).
  - 1. Joash was a son of David and rightful king who replaced his wicked grandmother who had murdered his uncles in order to take the throne for herself.
  - 2. Satan, like Athaliah, was never the rightful ruler of this world but he held his role through murder, deception, and unrighteous means.
  - 3. Christ (who is both the Son of God and a Son of David), by doing all that the Father required and taking His rightful place on His throne, finally and permanently deposed the lying and wicked despot named Satan and the Beast.
- C. Everyone who comes to Christ through repentance and belief in the gospel overcomes Satan in Christ.

1. All of Christ's righteousness is imputed to the Christian and the totality of His victory is ours also, as if we ourselves accomplished it.
2. We conquer Satan, leaving his kingdom and entering Christ's by Christ's blood and the word of our testimony.
  - a) Christ's blood must be applied to us if we are to enter into His kingdom. We don't get in based on our performance, but based on what Christ has done in our place; by putting our faith in Him.
  - b) The word of our testimony is that we have repented and believed in Christ, forsaking sin and our place in Satan's city and embracing righteousness and our place in God's city no matter the cost.

### III. Satan's dethroning ripples effects throughout heaven and on earth (12)

- A. In heaven and amongst heavenly people, the rise of Christ and fall of Satan are exuberantly celebrated.
- B. On earth amongst the people and demons still yoked to Satan, this is a season of great distress and anxiety.
  1. Satan is the sort of ruler who when he doesn't get his way, in his anger he thrashes about and kills his own in his rage.
    - a) He's like Darth Vader who chokes out his own generals and troops in his rage.
  2. It is also true that people who are in severe bondage to Satan develop something like Stockholm syndrome. Though his rule is destroying them, they are comforted by it and the rise of Christ's kingdom becomes threatening to them.
    - a) This is why the world is so quick to resist and even demonize Christ's church.

### IV. Satan's war against God's people has escalated because he knows His time is short (13-17)

- A. Satan wants to destroy God's people because of jealousy.
- B. Satan wants to destroy God's people because he hates God and thus everyone who follows after His ways.
  1. Floodwaters pour from his mouth, representing deceit which he uses to try and snatch people away from God's people.
- C. God empowers His people to escape Satan's wrath.
  1. Isaiah 40:31
    - a) God will rescue us, but we must learn to wait on Him and to trust in His provision.

# Nurture

Who is God? He is Christ the true and eternal King.

What has God done? He has ascended to His throne, thus dethroning Satan once and for all and crippling him forever.

Who are we? We are God's people who have conquered Satan in Christ by His blood and by the word of our testimony.

What is God calling us to do? He is calling us to follow His example by persevering through suffering, by enduring through temptation, by joining Christ in saving as many as possible, and by demonstrating the power and superiority of Christ's kingdom over the kingdom of Satan.

# Act

Charles Taylor writes that “firmness or perseverance doesn’t just denote the strength passively to bear suffering; but it means the power to engage unrelentingly in the good fight.” Christ models what it means to be truly human for us by demonstrating this principle. Indeed He endured suffering, but through His enduring suffering and refusing to break under the weight of His experiences, He persevered until everything required to defeat Satan was accomplished.

Our call is to follow in His footsteps. He has purchased for us a better kingdom, He has purchased for us His own righteousness, and in Him we have new regenerated lives. Indeed we face off daily against a mortally wounded raging beast. In our struggle we are being tested, refined, and strengthened but we are not adding anything to ourselves. Every good thing we have is from Christ and our trials merely serve to temper us, to prove our position in Christ to ourselves, and to demonstrate His kingdom and victory to the world around us.

We know beyond a shadow of a doubt that if we are truly in Christ, nothing can separate us from Him. Even death, which is the primary thing men fear, is nothing concerning to us anymore. If anything, death sends us right into paradise and so it will be a friend for the Christian in that sense. It's sting is no more. So because of who Jesus is, what He has done for us, and who we are now in Him, we are free to truly live and to orient our lives fully around Christ, His word, His people, and His kingdom.

We have already gained everything in Him so we have nothing left to lose and our true treasure cannot be taken away from us.