

AN EXPOSITION OF REVELATION CHAPTER TWELVE:
A BASIS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE FIGURE
OF SATAN IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

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CONCLUSION

This research project was first conceived in a classroom setting when a clear distinction was made between Satan and Lucifer. But some years later, I kept hearing many a preacher or teacher using the two terms interchangeably. This seeming contradiction drove me to my study with a view to having a clearer understanding of the figure or personality of Satan, and Revelation chapter twelve was chosen as a basis for that undertaking.

It is a thing of joy today that my ideas about Satan and of the book of Revelation which have hitherto been in embryo have now crystallized into concrete reality.

The concluding section of this work will not be complete if the cursory summary of the content of this paper is not presented. Also, the importance of Revelation chapter twelve will be succinctly stated, and be left as a launching pad for subsequent researchers to build on. Furthermore, a reiteration of the implication of the apocalypse and the defeat of Satan for the contemporary African Christian will further show the relevance of the book of Revelation for the African Christians. This will help to allay the fears, erase the ignorance, and the opaque or blurred vision of the average Christian reader, teacher, or preacher of the book of Revelation.

Cursory Summary

Following the introductory matters in chapter one, and the general overview of the related literature in the second chapter of this work, the essayist proceeded to the background of the book of Revelation which consists of the authorship, date, place and occasion, and the purpose of writing the book. In the same chapter, the structure of the book of Revelation is presented as a foundation for understanding the book of Revelation, vis-a-vis the figure of Satan.

The fourth chapter comprises the translation, exegesis and the identification of the images of Satan in the passage. The exegesis of the text was most educative and rewarding; the identification and discussion on the images of Satan were revealing and thrilling.

Chapter five deals with the defeat of Satan and its meaning. The mythological, biblical, and the African perspectives were discussed. One significant point to note here is that there is no belief in the fall of Satan in the African context. Rather, the average African believes that Satan is the messenger of 'God', and the supervisor of the works of the lesser divinities. Here lies the major difference between the New Testament concept of Satan and the African Traditional concept of it. But the African Christians, who though caught in the labyrinth of African - Christian culture, builds up his

faith in Christ based on his African background and claims the victory in the blood of the Lamb; the victory of Christ over sin, Satan, and death as his victory.

The Importance of Chapter Twelve

One major importance of this chapter, this writer opines, is that it is the sine qua non for the understanding of the figure of Satan in particular, and the book of Revelation in general. Chapter twelve is the peak of the book of Revelation from which the interpreter takes his bearing in studying the book. This is so because it contains about all the classes of symbolic representations in the book of Revelation. Below are some reasons for reaching the above conclusion:

1. Most of the personages dealt with in the entire book of Revelation are represented in this chapter. The three personages are the woman, her child (son) and the dragon. Others are Michael the archangel, the Devil, Satan or Serpent depending on his manifestation from time to time. For example, "woman" is mentioned in Revelation 2:20 (associated with Jezebel) and in 17:3,4,7,9 and 18 (in connection with the harlot). "Son" appears in Revelation 1:13 (son of man); 2:18 (son of God); 14:4 (son of man), and 21:2 (my son). Also, "dragon" is mentioned in Revelation 13:2 (in connection with power); 4 (with reference to worship; 11, (in comparison with a lamb); 16:13 (describing his mouth) and in 20:2.

Furthermore, the "Devil" is mentioned in Revelation 2:10; 20:2 and 10; "Satan" in 2:9, 13, 24; 3:9; 20:2 and 7; and "Serpent" in 9:19 and 20:2. These references indicate to us how important these personages are in this book.

2. The images, and the activities of Satan are more clearly seen and understood in this chapter from which the rest of the chapters of the book are made explicit.

3. All the different categories of codes of interpretation or symbolic representations are rooted in this chapter. For example, in the class of language code, there are: the sun, the moon, the stars - heavenly luminaries - the throne, the river or sea. In the animal code there are four represented: the sea monster - dragon - the eagle, the serpent and the lamb. The colour code is represented by red, while the number code is represented by 7, 10, 12, and 1260.

4. The chapter shows a clearer picture of a suffering nation (Israel and her offspring), her victory over Satan and the forces of evil than any other in the book of Revelation.

5. It is the only chapter in Revelation that succinctly presents the resume of the life span of Jesus Christ from birth to ascension as indicated in 12:2,4, and 5.

6. It is the only chapter that presents almost all the images and the designations of Satan in this book (v.9). Here he is referred to as the great dragon; the old serpent; the devil; Satan, and the one deceiving the inhabitants of the whole earth. In verse 10, he is presented as the one accusing the brethren both day and night.

7. A lot of the language expressions in this chapter are copiously repeated in some other chapters of this book. For example,

"Great" in 1:10; 2:22; 6:4, 12, 15, 17; 7:9, 14; 8:8, 10; 9:2, 14; and 11:8, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, and 19.

Other references are found in chapters 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20 and 21.

"Cast" 2:10, 14, 22; 4:10; 8:5, 7, ; 15:19; 18:19, 21; 19:20; 20:3, 10, 14, 15.

"Sun" 1:16; 6:12; 7:16; 8:12 9:2, 10:1 16:8; 19:17; 21:23; 22:5.

"Moon" 6:12; 8:12; 21:23.

"Stars" 1:16, 20; 2:1; 3:1; 6:13; 8:12.

Other very common words in Revelation 12 that are found in the rest of the book are: heaven, earth, sea, river, throne, angels, great voice, witness and so on. Numbers and colours are common features.

Therefore, in order to understand the book of Revelation, one has to take a cue from the twelfth

chapter of the book, and from there one can go forward and backward in one's reading and interpretation. In other words, the book of Revelation is more clearly understood in the light of the the content of chapter 12, than the reverse. Chapter 12 serves as the key to open the understanding of the book of Revelation, and here lies the importance of this research.

In the light of the above, this writer feels that a thorough knowledge of chapter twelve of Revelation lays a good foundation for the understanding of the figure of Satan in this book - Revelation. The symbolic expressions represented in numbers, colours, and animals show that apocalyptic literature is unique, and the ability to know the symbols, and their meanings enhances the understanding of the student and makes the reading and the interpretation of the book of Revelation relatively easy, pleasurable, and intelligible.

The Implications of the Apocalypse and the Defeat of Satan for the contemporary African Christian

A lot has been said on this point above, therefore, it needs not to be flogged here. Suffice it to say that the book of Revelation is written for the African Christians who by their cultural upbringing, are used to signs, symbols, visions, and imagery with which Revelation is dealing. The African Christians are also familiar with prophecy, dualism, and are in persistent conflict with the forces of evil, principalities and

