

## The Victory in Heaven Brings Hope on Earth!

St. Michael & All Angels – 09/27/24 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Revelation 12:7-12 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 11, [The heavenly voice says of the martyrs before Jesus,] **“And they have conquered [the accuser] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.”**

### **Introduction**

✘ This text in Revelation 12 today begins with a statement that seems unthinkable; utterly out of place to our Christian ears, “Now war arose in heaven...”. How can this be? Didn’t the people proclaim, when Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, that His path to the cross; that His resurrection from the dead was going to make that impossible? They shouted out, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” (Lk. 19:38)

➔ In fact, it’s easy for us to think that our warfare here on earth, which includes physical struggles and bloodshed is the greatest conflict in all of Creation. But as Ephesians 6:12 corrects us in that thinking, our greatest war is “not...against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

✘ And one of Satan’s greatest and most successful lies is getting people to believe that he is only a mythical figure, concocted by the authors of Scripture and not a real being; not a real threat. You see, if you don’t think Satan exists, then he can work under the radar much more effectively. But the Bible accurately reveals Satan for who he truly is! We see that clearly from Satan’s presence in the Garden of Eden as he tempted Adam and Eve and later in the desert when he tempts Jesus.

➔ Now here in Revelation, chapter 12, the work of Jesus comes to a climax as He overcomes Satan and the forces of all evil. We’re told that He chooses to use the work of God’s good angels, namely Michael and company, in bringing Satan’s activity to an end as the one who accuses sinners before God day and night. You might think of Satan as the prosecuting attorney in the heavenly courtroom that argues against sinners before God. And what is his primary accusation against us sinners? That we are not worthy of fellowship with God now or for eternity.

✘ But the joyous message of this text is that this accuser of all mankind, Satan ... he is no longer in heaven to bring those accusations against us. He has been expelled; thrown to the earthly curb with the point of Michael’s spear against his devilish rear. And that victory in Heaven is a big deal for us today, because it brings hope to us, here on earth!

### **I. Satan accused sinners before God.**

✘ This heavenly conflict; Satan’s rebellion and removal from heaven frankly is one of those mysteries that God tells us very little about in His Word. We do know that Satan led a substantial rebellion of angels sometime after creation, but before Adam and Eve fell into sin. Revelation 12:4 indicates that up to a third of the angels got caught up in the same temptation that Satan used later on Adam and Eve: “You will be like God” (Gen. 3:5).

➔ And today’s text is one of only three places in Scripture that we hear a few more details of this mystery. The books of Job and Zechariah (3:1-5) along with verse 10 here in Revelation 12 show us that after Satan’s fall he still had access to the presence of God for some time. His primary activity was to bring accusations before God against sinners, as verse 10 says: “The

accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.”

→ It's not a pretty scene; that powerful angel, Satan relentlessly reminded God about the sins of mankind day and night! It wasn't enough that he deceived Adam and Eve. His goal was to keep that pattern of sin in Adam's descendants, including you and me, always before God.

✘ Zechariah's vision describes the accuser's work in fine detail. Zechariah says, “Then [an angel] showed me Joshua the high priest standing before The Angel of Yahweh, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And Yahweh said to Satan, ‘Yahweh rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?’ Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. And the angel said to those who were standing before him, ‘Remove the filthy garments from him.’ And to him he said, ‘Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments’” (Zech. 3:1–4).

→ The picture there is clear: Satan reveled in the power he still had to stand before God accusing and condemning sinners. And the Angel of Yahweh, who is Jesus before His birth, had to defend Joshua the priest against all of Satan's accusations.

## II. Good angels enforced Christ's victory.

✘ But here's the good news from God to us today: this accusing activity of Satan; it is no longer effective because he was defeated in a great war – thrown out of heaven, down to earth. Verses 7-9 give us the blow by blow account: “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.” Never again can this accusing dragon, Satan, appear before God because Michael, God's military general, along with his fellow faithful angels conquered that liar and all of his evil minions.

→ But let's make sure that we don't take this victory in the same false direction that so many in our world like to take it. Yes, Michael and God's good angels fought the battle and yes, they won the victory. But remember, angels are only God's created servants. On their own their power would be no more than that of Satan and his demons with him.

→ Verse 11 though tells us how the martyred Christians overcame Satan and the rest of the evil angels: “And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even to death.” If this is how these sainted Christians overcame Satan, then it is also how God's faithful angels were able to defeat him. It is only “by the blood of the Lamb.”

✘ This Lamb is clearly Jesus, the unblemished, perfect sacrifice whose blood makes it so that the guilt of sin no longer clings to those who believe in Christ. The accuser's accusations; they mean nothing to God now!

→ In fact, Satan had to be kicked out because His ultimate Victor, the Lamb had now ascended into heaven to take His rightful place before God as the Advocate for all sinners; the One who intercedes for our justification before His Father, the Judge. John writes of this wonderful work in his first letter and says, “If anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the [substitutionary sacrifice] for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 Jn. 2:1–2). Paul also tells us of Christ as our defense attorney before the Father in Romans 8:34, “Christ Jesus is the one who died – more than that, who was raised – who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”

⊗ This concept of the conquering power being in the blood of Christ is sometimes a bit difficult to wrap our minds around. Blood generally conjures up the idea of an injury, maybe even a debilitating blow that points to weakness and defeat.

→ More familiar to our thinking is the idea that power comes from great physical strength like that of an individual who has spent hours upon hours at the gym pumping iron; lifting weights to build up muscle in every tissue of his body. The goal of a warrior then is to work harder; train more than the enemy so that you are stronger; more capable of victory when the time comes to fight. Was that St. Michael's secret to victory? Did he pump more iron in heaven than Satan did in hell?

→ No, the key to this battle against Satan and his evil-angel comrades was not about the head to head; angel against angel battle. It was about the Lord Jesus confronting and crushing the power of evil at its source; in all of its manifestations – in the devil, yes, but also in sin and in death! And that could only be conquered by the sacrifice of the perfect, sinless Lamb whose blood was pumped out on the cross as the payment for all of our sin. Michael and his good angels are not an independent militia who just happen to pump more iron in the gym than Satan and his evil angels. They are the army of the Lamb. He is the source of their power over Satan. It is from His blood; from His victory at the cross and in the empty tomb that they are given the power to enforce the Lamb's victory and throw Satan out of heaven forever!

### **III. Victory in Heaven now our source of hope.**

⊗ So, here's what all of this means for you and me today folks. This victory in heaven; it brings us hope here on earth right now. Verse 12 says, "Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and the sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"

→ Now, I know, those words don't seem very reassuring at first do they? Yet in spite of Satan's wrath which we all feel every day – the relentless temptations; the oppressive guilt; him throwing our sin in our faces and trying to get us to believe that we are worthless; that no one will love us anymore; that no one could love us anymore ... in spite of that and all of the other pain and suffering we have to endure, Jesus' victory over Satan and death means that He has won for us absolute victory over the guilt of our sin – every sin as well!

→ And that gives us great hope, even while we remain here on earth. You see, Satan's presence and all of his flaming darts at us here on earth are only his last ditch efforts to take us down to hell with him before the final judgement of his defeat is declared at Jesus' return. But he is here – no longer able to access God to accuse us!

⊗ When your sins are drowned in the waters of Holy Baptism, or absolved in the Pastor's proclamation, or forgiven through the eating of Christ's body and the drinking of His blood in this Holy Sacrament, you my dear Christian, you stand free and forgiven before God in heaven. Jesus is your advocate; Satan cannot accuse you anymore!

→ On top of that, Scripture reminds us that the same angels who cast Satan out of heaven are the angels who guard and watch over us each day in this earthly life. Michael and the other good angels have Christ's victory on their side; they do not go up against Satan as equals but as warriors who are filled with the unconquerable power of Yahweh, their Creator and Master.

⊗ Anyone who thinks that we do not have hope in the midst Satan's evil attempts here on earth is either unaware or in complete denial of chapter 20 in Revelation. It's there that Satan's destiny is declared. Chapter 20:10: "And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

## **Conclusion**

✘ So today we especially thank God for this victory in heaven, won by Christ on the cross and carried out by Michael and God's angelic hosts. For this victory fills our earthly struggles with hope as we keep the eyes of our faith focused always upon Him and our heavenly goal.

➔ Surrounded and protected by God's angels, we join their voices in praising the Lamb as we are taught from Revelation 5:9-10: "Worthy are You ... for You were slain, and by Your blood You ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and You have made them (us) a kingdom and priests to our God, and they (we) shall reign on the earth." Amen.