

“The Rest of the Story . . .”  
 Pastor Sam Richards  
 Sermon for 7 May 2023  
 Text: Revelation 12:11

**And they** (the offspring of the heavenly woman who in her pregnant splendor emanated the radiances of her indwelling divinity—even the Lord Jesus!—the church in symbolic form) **defeated him** (the great, red and fiery dragon, Satan, along with all his demonic cohorts) **overcame him by the blood of the Lamb** (the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross) **and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death** (they knew what they believed, and for that truth they were willing to give up all—*because He is worthy!*—even to dying the death!).

This verse has a very significant truth behind it: our ultimate safety and security lies with the church, not with the state, or the government whether local, state, national or global. The church embodies our eternal security and her victory over Satan, sin, darkness and evil is our victory—our assured outcome.

Well, if that is what you were driving at, why didn't you say so? I just had to laugh when John perceiving the heart of last week's message alluded to the very verse which is, and was the text for “Pregnant Splendor!” He did so in the testimony time. And this morning I get to complete that message. According to our text, there are three things: the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony and their “to the death courageous motivation” that secured the victory, the overcoming of our ancient foe. The offspring of the heavenly woman; that would be us, the church have the same weapons, and, hopefully are united by their undying forever love of Jesus (**He is worthy**). I am referring to a. the power of the blood, the blood shed by Jesus on the cross as payment of the penalty of sin (our punishment, our debt) and b. the **word of their testimony. It is the blood** which redeems, saves, purifies, liberates, and sanctifies us—rendering us **new creatures in Christ, the redeemed of the Lord who are *indwelt and empowered by the indwelling Christ through the Holy Spirit***. That is to say, we have died to self, to our sinfulness in a comprehensive and real manner and now, through the resurrection power of Christ, walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh any longer. In us the kingdom has come and it is a glorious beginning to the eternal weight of glory conveyed to us by the crucified and risen Son. Perhaps, if we called ourselves *Easterites*, we could convey some of this vitality of hope, this newness of life to others better. All Easterites are “born again” and all of them are born from above—it is the essence of who we have become in Him.

Here are some further notes on the meaning of the great sign, the heavenly woman. All the lights of heaven are brought together here for a description which cannot fail to remind us of the picture of the Shulamite in the Canticles ([Song of Solomon 6:10](#)): “Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners (or, *the heavenly host*)?” It is the picture of the bride, the Church. The beams of the divine glory clothe her; she has caught—like Moses—the radiance of her Lord, whose countenance was as the sun ([Revelation 1:16](#)); the moon is beneath her feet; she rises superior to all change, and lays all lesser lights of knowledge under tribute; she is crowned with a crown of twelve stars: the illustrious members (apostles) of the Church (twelve being the representative number in Old Testament—

(for the twelve tribes of Israel) as well as New Testament times) form her crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ. —Ellicott's Commentary (Parenthesis mine.)

. . . in particular, *Salus*, the emblem of security and protection, is represented as a woman standing upon a globe, to represent the safety and security of the world under the emperor's care. —Benson *It should not surprise us that Salus, a pagan divinity should be put to secular use—appearing on Roman coinage opposite images of the current emperor!*

. . . and having on her head **the crown of twelve stars**, the twelve apostles, who, however, are related closely to Israel's twelve tribes. (As stated above) The Church, in passing over into the Gentile world, is (1) persecuted; (2) then seduced, as heathenism begins to react on her.

This is the key to the meaning of the symbolic woman, beast, harlot, and false prophet. Woman and beast form the same contrast as the Son of man and the beasts in Daniel. The woman is symbolic and she is to be understood symbolically just as are the other figures in this revelation.

As the Son of man comes from heaven, so the woman is seen in heaven (Rev 12:1). The two beasts arise respectively (or, correspondingly) out of the sea (compare Dan 7:3) and the earth (Rev 13:1, 11): their origin is not of heaven, but of earth earthy. - Jamieson, Fausset-Brown

My citation of Ellicott, Benson and Jamieson, Fausset-Brown as trustworthy commentators should not trouble nor dismay you. In fact it should establish that my interpretation of the heavenly woman is not merely something concocted in my own imagination and that I build responsibly on the shoulders of faith men whose knowledge and expertise, greater than mine, reflect the best use of Biblical scholarship. In the interests of full disclosure I share this—it is no tipping of my hand, a secret; rather a signal of due diligence in sermon preparation. And citing them is giving credit where credit is due.

Moving on, I want to mention specifically, John Gill's explanation of the meaning of the phrase **the word of their testimony** (in verse 11) he calls it ***the doctrine of the apostles***, their original preaching, or their gospel proclamation. What was that apostolic preaching? Well, 1 Cor. 15:1-11 is clear and instructive:

**15 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast [a]the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.**

**3 For I delivered to you [b]as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.**

**6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; 7 then He appeared to [c]James, then to all the apostles; 8 and last of all, as [d]to one**

untimely born, He appeared to me also. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, [e]and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. 11 Whether then *it was* I or they, so we preach and so you believed.<sup>1</sup>

Gill writes . . . “this(verse) signifies, that the church openly owned the doctrine of the apostles, and was not ashamed of it before men, and publicly preached, and held it forth in her ministers, to all the world; and that *this was her crown and glory*, so long as she held it in its power, purity, and was both what she gloried in, and was a glory, an ornament to her: and this was also an emblem of her victory over her enemies, and of her future happiness, and pointed at the means of both; that it was by a faithful and steadfast adherence to the doctrine of the apostles that she overcame Satan, and all her spiritual enemies, and came to the possession of the crown of life and glory.”

They did not so love their lives that they were unwilling to die as martyrs. They did not shrink back when threatened with death, but remained firm in their attachment to their Savior, and left their dying testimony to the truth and power of religion. It was by these means (meaning the **blood of the Lamb** and the **Word of their testimony** and their **to the death valor**) that Christianity was established in the world, and John, in the scene before us, saw it thus triumphant, and saw the angels and the redeemed in heaven celebrating the triumph. —Barnes Notes

What was effectual then (their weapons and their attitude) are effectual now! His word does not go forth and come back void.

And, hopefully, you have internalized that the **enmity** planted by God between Eve and the Serpent explains the malevolence of Satan towards Eve and her offspring, his malice, cruelty and fury towards the church and the people of God. His hatred is co-opted by the world and that is why we experience oppression and persecution—it is war! That **enmity** is also the point of entry into the constant spiritual warfare that we are warriors in!

**Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them.**

**Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows his time is short.** (v. 12) **Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *Child*. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness to her place (as prepared by God) **where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time** (3 1/2 years/42 months—the length of the two witnesses**

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<sup>1</sup> Footnotes

- a. 1 Corinthians 15:2 Lit *to what word I*
- b. 1 Corinthians 15:3 Lit *among the first*
- c. 1 Corinthians 15:7 Or *Jacob*
- d. 1 Corinthians 15:8 Lit *to an untimely birth*
- e. 1 Corinthians 15:9 Lit *who am*

testimony and the period of the beast's authority to make war with the saints and **to overcome them** (see 13:7 and Daniel 7:25;12:7)—and mid-way through the tribulation) **from the presence of the serpent. So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. But the earth helped the woman and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. And the dragon was enraged with the woman and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of Gods and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.** (vv. 13-17)

Charles Spurgeon has preached extensively on this topic. I want to cite a short piece of his work:

“The glorious cause of holiness and God, incarnated in the church, is clothed with the splendor of light, and truth, and majesty. . . . she is covered with the underived splendor of indwelling Deity, and her walk is bright with the reflected glory of holiness—while her crown of joy is found in her complete ministry as represented by the apostolic twelve. She is fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. Behold, then, the typical woman, and see how glorious is the cause of truth and holiness.”

“In the vision the queenly woman is about to bring forth the promised seed. She cries in her anguish, “travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.” This, of course, may represent the church crying day and night unto God in times gone by for the coming of the promised deliverer—a cry which increased in intensity and agony of desire as the time drew on. But it may also depict the constant condition of a true church—always travailing in birth till Christ is formed in the hearts of men. Till the man-child, namely, Christ mystical, is born here below; till the Christ is so brought forth among the sons of men that He and all those who by grace, are enabled to overcome the wicked one, shall rule the nations with a rod of iron. (Rev 2:26, 27).” (CHS)

Whatever else might be meant by **the war in heaven**, to which the above passage alludes, we may know that a. the powers of evil have done their utmost to overcome Christ and b. they have failed.

Good is more powerful than evil and light more powerful than darkness. And our hope is that He has achieved this for the whole universe—that it has cosmic reach and application. That He has done this for us is the core of the gospel: the powers that are for us are far superior to those arrayed against us. **If God be for us, who can stand against?** (Romans 8:31) The Spirit which communes with our spirit, awakens our conscience and keeps us on alert with regard to our enemies, which assists us in our weakness and fills us with remorse when we yield and succumb to sin or temptation, that Spirit, along with all good influences, are for us and helps from our earliest years until our last breath—parental counsel, little, young prayers, the words and example of dear friends and family, corrective sorrows, the forced pauses and leisure of sickness, the calm and peaceful face of a just elder (quite distinct from the furtive and festive glances of the wicked; yes, and good books (especially the best book, the Bible), the blessings of thought, meditation and labor, of completed duty, prayer and intimate communion with God, the powerful words of truth, of love and the pleasure we draw from beauty in theater, dance, sports, poetry, painting, sculpture and music—all these

good and common things are like so many ministering angels, who also abound around us. They are all fighting under the banner of Christ in the good fight we wage by faith. Where there is no battle, there is no victory and where conflict is missing, there's no one, or anything to overcome! But, we and these allies, are arrayed on one side against all that is false, evil, mischievous and dark! And Scripture informs us that a victory won elsewhere for good (in heaven, say) must eventually reach this further shore.

Good angels have conquered the bad ones—and their leader has suffered defeat and expulsion. And the source of their victory lies in their obedience; they won because they were God's champions—and the devil has only himself. In this realm obedience is strength and disobedience insures defeat! Yes, obedience, humility and trust in God—these are qualities granted us in advance, virtue and perfected holiness. And without them our characters are poor and weak and all our ways unstable. Where our thoughts and desires are mainly selfish, their defeat awaits its moment. For in this warfare, all are warriors. *Of course, we shall be assaulted!* And wherever we are attacked, we, like good soldiers, mount a counter-attack, we offer up resistance. We even take the battle to the foe not content to be passive, or timid. The way to victory is through advance—all retreats must be strategic! There are many battles, and many campaigns in the execution of spiritual warfare. Our purpose is not merely to repulse the enemy, but to defeat, to overcome and overthrow him. Where the battles are most severe, the victories are sweetest. The angels stood firm in their conflict—temptation could not obtain a foothold; we must imitate their glorious example.

If we know that Satan's strategy is to drive true religion from the world through oppression and persecution, we should curiously be emboldened when such things come against us. Wherever these things are experienced, seen, we know there the battle is and we rush to the fire, to the fight, to the point of danger.

**Amen**