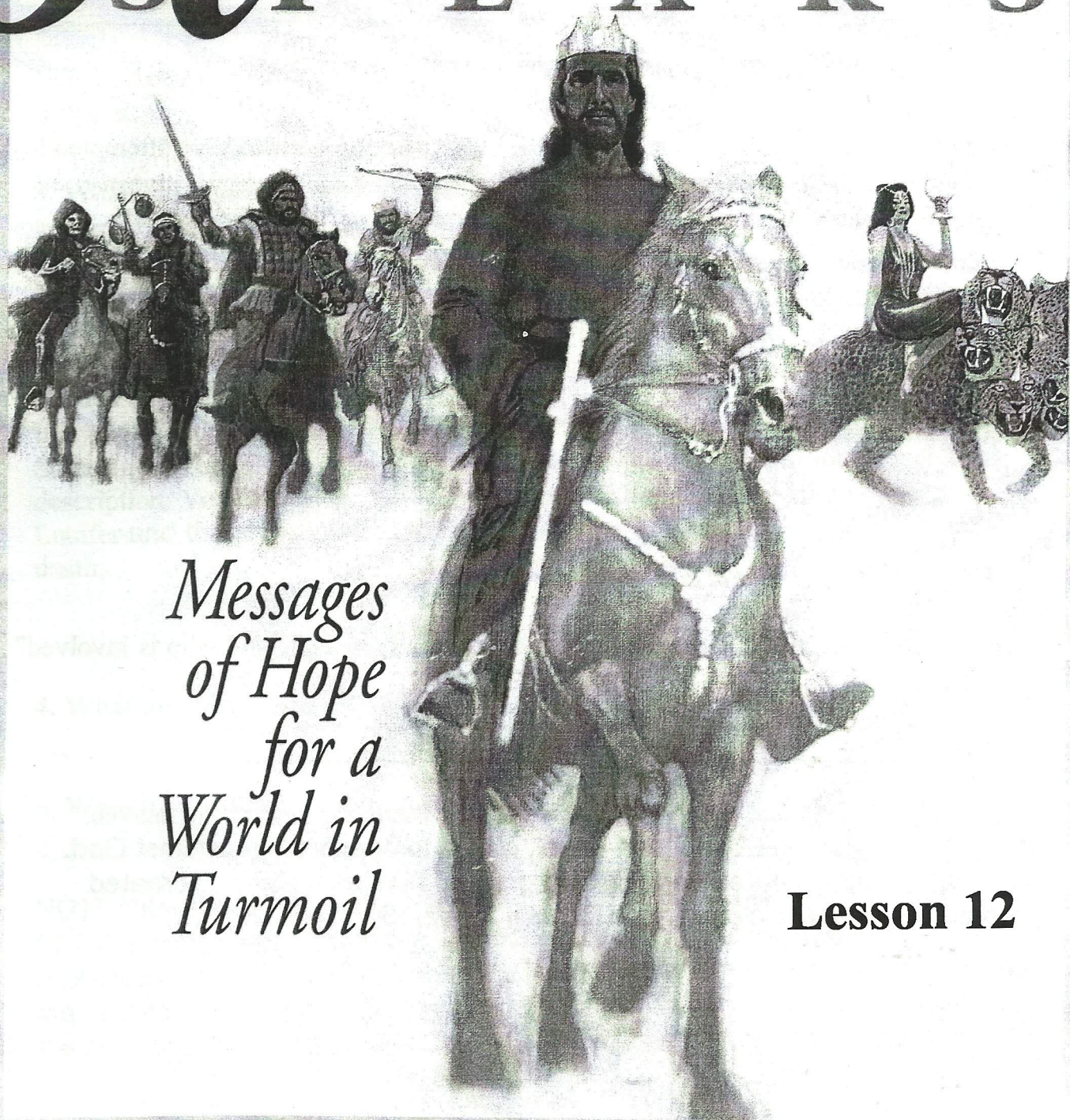


Revelation

S P E A K S



*Messages
of Hope
for a
World in
Turmoil*

Lesson 12

God's Church: Persecuted Yet Faithful

[This chapter is based on Revelation, Chapter 12]

Throughout the millennia, Satan has especially attacked those who have attempted to obey God. Revelation Chapter 12 spans the history of this controversy between good and evil from the inception of sin in heaven to the final conflict in the last days.

In four moving encounters, the prophecies of Revelation reveal God's triumph over the powers of darkness. This graphic portrayal focuses the spotlight of history upon the great controversy between Christ and Satan. You will be thrilled to discover how truth will triumph at last and how you can triumph with it! Throughout history God has been victorious in the battle against Satan. Victory is assured! Let's study about these encounters.

READ: Revelation 12:17.

Battle Number One: War in Heaven

1. What surprising scene is described as taking place in heaven, and who is involved? Revelation 12:7, 8.

NOTE: The reason there is war on earth is because there was first war in heaven. Lucifer, the Lightbearer, a glorious angel, chose to openly rebel against God. Although he was created perfect, God granted him, as well as all created beings, the power of choice. See Ezekiel 28:12-15.

Revelation - 2

God does not force or coerce anyone to obey Him. He wants His creatures to obey Him because they love Him. Of course, if you give someone the power of choice, you run the risk of that person making the wrong choice. And Satan chose to rebel against God.

2. How many of the angels chose to join Satan in his rebellion against God?
Revelation 12:4.

NOTE: According to Revelation 1:20, the "stars" represent angels in symbolic prophecy.

3. What happened to Satan and his angels when they rebelled against God in the heavenly courts? Revelation 12:9.

NOTE: In this first encounter between God and Satan, God is triumphant! Satan loses the battle. He and all his evil angels are cast out of heaven into the earth.

It is important to note that God did not create Planet Earth as a dumping place for Satan and his angels! Earth was created beautiful and perfect, glorious beyond description. Yet, in fairness, God gave Adam and Eve the same choice He gave Lucifer and the angels: obedience and eternal life, or disobedience and eternal death.

Battle Number Two: Satan's Attack on Jesus

4. What amazing sight did John see in heaven? Revelation 12:1.

5. What does a pure woman symbolize in Bible prophecy? Jeremiah 6:2.

NOTE: In the Book of Isaiah, God said of Zion, "You are my people" (Isaiah 51:16). Paul repeatedly uses the symbol of a woman to describe the church (Ephesians 5:25-32; 2 Corinthians 11:2). Further on in Revelation, John pictures the church as the bride of Christ (Revelation 19:6-8). The woman in white in Revelation 12 clearly represents God's true church.

6. Who does the great red dragon of verse 3 represent? Compare Revelation 12:3 with 12:9.

7. What does Satan attempt to do? Revelation 12:4.

NOTE: Satan attempted to destroy Jesus by influencing King Herod to pass a decree that all male children under two years old be killed (Matthew 2:12-20). Warned by an angel in a dream, Joseph and Mary took the child and fled to Egypt until Herod had died.

David symbolically describes the Messiah's ultimate triumph over His enemies by destroying them with a rod of iron (Psalm 2). The "rod of iron" symbolism was accepted in earliest times as a reference to the victory of the Messiah over His enemies.

8. What was the ultimate act of desperation on Satan's part to destroy Christ? Mark 15:22-25.

9. How does Revelation 12:5 describe the triumph of Jesus in this encounter?

NOTE: In the greatest crime in history, Jesus was falsely accused, condemned to death, and crucified! But even in death Christ was victorious! He could have called ten thousand angels to set Himself free, but He voluntarily laid down His life for you and me. Through His death, we have life. The grave could not hold Him. As Revelation 12 predicted, He burst the bonds of the tomb. He rose from the dead! He went back to be with His Father.

In this second battle, Jesus is triumphant! Satan again loses the battle!

Battle Number Three: Satan Attacks God's People

10. Since Satan could no longer attack Jesus, upon whom did Satan focus his wrath? Revelation 12:12, 13, 15.

11. Where did the woman, or church, flee when she was persecuted by Satan? Revelation 12:14, 16.

12. How long would this period of persecution last? Revelation 12:6,14.

NOTE: After the death of Jesus and the disciples, Satan attempted to destroy God's church through the fierce persecution of the pagan Roman emperors. Christians were burned at the stake. They were thrown to the lions. But in spite of this cruel persecution, the Christian church grew.

In an attempt to counteract this phenomenal growth, Satan brought compromise into the church. Doctrinal heresy *crept* in. Church and state were united. By A.D. 538 this apostasy was fully developed.

Since one prophetic day equals one literal year, the 1,260 days equal 1,260 years. Receiving civil as well as religious authority in A.D. 538, the pope was the major force in Europe until the overthrow of the papal dominion by Napoleon's general, Berthier, in 1798. Thus the 1,260 years, or the 42 months of prophecy! came to a close. (A biblical month is 30 days-Genesis 7:11, 8:4, 7:24).

The history of God's people during this wilderness period, or the Dark Ages, was one of torture, imprisonment, floggings, and martyrdom. Historians estimate that more than fifty million Christians were martyred during this time. But God's church came forth stronger and purer in spite of the persecution. God's followers remained faithful until death. *God* and His people triumph again!

Battle Number Four: God's Last-Day People

13. Upon whom will the devil especially center his wrath in the last days? Revelation 12:17.

NOTE: Satan's final attempt for world dominion before Christ returns will be made on God's remnant or last-day people. The word *remnant* means "that which remains."

14. How are God's faithful last-day people described in this prophecy? What are their twin characteristics? Revelation 12:17.

a. _____

b. _____

15. How does God describe His people who stand courageously for truth in the last days? Revelation 14:12.

NOTE: Today the issue is the same as it was millennia ago in heaven when Satan first rebelled against God. The issue is loyalty! The question is clear: Whose side are you on?

One-third of the angels in heaven listened to, and believed, Satan's lie that it was not important to obey God. Throughout the ages, Satan has fiercely attacked those who determined to obey God. Nevertheless, God has always been with His people!

In the final days of earth's history, truth will triumph. God will have a group of men and women who are loyal to Him. Since they love Him, they will willingly obey all of His commands. In their own strength they are weak, but in Jesus they are strong.

16. After studying this lesson, do you see the importance of trusting God and following Him in all He asks you to do?

Yes___ No___

My Response

___ I desire to follow my Lord and be faithful until death.

___ I want to be on God's side in this battle.