

Casting Out Demons
DWJD - Week 6
Matthew 4+12
10/16/22

Introduction

Tim. Pastor. Revelation 12.

HN Leaders Summit

- Conviction + Imagination - Dreaming for the New Year (prayer + feedback)
- Giving + Church Planting

Let's Pray.

Iranian Pastor

Iranian Pastor. A few months ago Jeni Allen, who I know many of are familiar with - she's a writer, speaker, founder of the If:Gathering - she released an interview with one of the leaders of the house church movement going on in Iran. And if you're not familiar, what the Holy Spirit is doing in the church in Iran right now is absolutely shocking. It's one of the most dangerous places to be a Christian - literally life-threatening, and yet it's the number one fastest growing center of Christianity right now in the entire world. Just incredible.

And the interview is fascinating, it's well worth the time - but the Iranian pastor - who you know they've got his voice dubbed over and all that for security said something that as I was thinking about this sermon just struck me. He was talking about the Western Church. The Church that we live in, that I'm passionate about pastoring in and caring for - what we all experience here and now, he said this:

"It's like the Church in the west is under some sort of satanic lullaby."

Ouch, right?

Here's what he means - his argument is that the Church, broadly speaking, here in America and in other parts of the western world is asleep to the realities of what's taking place on a cosmic and spiritual level all around us. To the realities that there is a battle going on between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness that has real consequences and implications for our life here and now and into eternity.

And it's like everytime we try to wake up to the realities of God and the battle of good and evil - to try and live our lives with any reference point of something beyond what's right in front of our face, Satan just says "shh shh shh go back to sleep. Nothing to see here." A proverbial - "pay no attention to the man behind the curtain."

And he calls it satanic because he said if we would wake up to the realities of this very real spiritual enemy and enemies and a very real spiritual war - that it would do things we could not even imagine for the flourishing of our own faith and the spread of the gospel into our neighborhoods, communities, cities, and nation.

- If you could understand that your inability to wake up early to be with God and pray is not just about being a morning person but a very real spiritual war - that would give you power to fight.

- If you could have eyes to see that your depression and anxiety is not *just* chemical imbalances, or a stressful workplace environment, or social media comparison trap hangovers but a very real spiritual war - that would give you power to fight.
- If you could wrap your mind around the fact that the crippling fear you have to talk to your coworker about the gospel is not simply social anxiety or shyness but a very real spiritual war - that would give you power to fight.
- If you could get that your constant fighting with your spouse is not simply personality disagreements or pain points with the kids but a very real spiritual war - that would give you the power to fight.

But if the devil can just keep us asleep, keep us focused on what's right in front of us, keep us thinking that the world is only rational and scientific and immanent, then we will remain lifeless, cold, and unable to see any kingdom progress in the spaces we inhabit.

So here's the invitation of Jesus as we, His disciples, learn to do what He did - **it's to wake up and fight**. To do the work Jesus did during his time on earth to push back the kingdom of darkness in the spaces he found himself.

To Engage in Spiritual Warfare.

By fighting against sin and temptation, by preaching the gospel and pushing back the kingdom of darkness through good deeds and good news....

- Fighting sin and temptation from the devil. Fighting to say "no" to sin and "yes" to God such that He would remain the perfect, spotless sacrifice for sins.
- Through casting out demons, healing the sick, and preaching against the kingdom of darkness.
- Through calming the sea, and declaring power and authority over the chaos of a broken creation.

And so so much more. So I want to invite us tonight into this very same practice. Into the fight.

So here's my goals for us tonight, here's where I want us to go:

1. **Show us this cosmic war.**
2. **Show us the specific ways this will show up in our lives.**
3. **Weapons for the war.**

COSMIC WAR

To do this, let's hop into **Revelation 12.**

If you're not familiar with the book of Revelation most of the book is a literary genre of the Bible called "apocalyptic literature". Now, when you hear apocalypse don't think - end of the world. An apocalypse in the Bible is a moment where God pulls back the curtain and shows someone what is happening in the world from a divine perspective and then they use that vision to challenge or encourage the people of God.

And that's exactly what's taking place in the book of Revelation. John, one of the disciples of Jesus is given this vision from God - and there's all these different aspects to it - there's letters he writes to various churches, there's visions of what's to come at what Christians call "the end times" when Christ will return once and for all to establish his forever kingdom - but there's also moments where John looks backwards and through illustrations and vivid imagery points back to what has taken place in the past.

And that's what's happening in Revelation 12. God is peeling back the curtain for John and showing him from a divine perspective the cosmic battle that has been taking place throughout history between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness.

And this cosmic battle, according to Revelation 12, has 4 Scenes or 4 Acts.

ACT I - Satan vs. God

Let's look together starting at v7...

7 Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. 9 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.

So in this scene that John is describing there's a woman (who we'll come back to in a second) and there's a dragon - who the text says is **satan**.

Now, just so we're all on the same page - Satan, or "The Devil" as it is translated in Greek, is shown in the Scriptures as the chief enemy of God.

According to **Isaiah 14**, Satan is originally an angel, a being created by God to serve God's people, who is not happy being under the rule and reign of God. He wants to be god. He wants to rule and reign and have ultimate authority and glory and exalt himself above God.

And at some point in the historical timeline, between Genesis 1 when God creates all things, including angels, and Genesis 3 when Satan is in the garden tempting Adam and Eve, a war breaks out in heaven.

That's what John is describing here in Revelation 12 - Satan gathers other angels who are on board with this plan and leads basically a coup against God. And there's fighting between Michael and his angels and Satan and his angels, Satan loses and in response to the rebellion God banishes Satan by throwing him down to earth.

This is fun - if you want the 2022 translation of that word you could say God bounced satan from heaven. Which I think is just really cool. God's like - "You gotta roll satan, get out." God sends him down to earth, and the text says this dragon has seven heads, it's the number of perfection - meaning satan has complete authority now on the earth, albeit borrowed authority from God (Luke 4), but authority nonetheless. In His sovereignty, God sends Satan down to earth to rule for a season.

- Jesus calls him "the ruler of this world" in John 12:31.
- He is called "the god of this age" in 2 Cor 4:4.
- Ephesians 2:2 adds that he is - "the prince of the power of the air."

Earth becomes his little kingdom to rule over under borrowed authority from God for a season.

That's Act I. Satan fighting against God wanting to be like God, loses and is sent to earth.

But He doesn't quit. If he can't go directly after God, He then turns his attention to God's people.

Act II - Satan vs. The Israelites

Go back up to verse 1:

1 And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. 2 She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth.

Now there's two things going on here with this reference to a woman. Two pictures John is trying to paint:

The most obvious one is that this is a reference to Mary, the mother of Jesus. This will be abundantly clear later in the chapter. Mary - the woman who is pregnant with Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.

But it's not just Mary, it's bigger than Mary.

The woman, and her crown of 12 stars, depicted here is a symbol that points back to Genesis 37, when Joseph (the guy with the multicolored coat, remember him?) and his brothers are described as the 12 stars of the sky. These same brothers who become the leaders of the 12 tribes of Israel. So this picture of a woman with 12 stars in her crown is actually the people of God. She is Israel. Who according to Isaiah 27, gives birth to the one who will fight the dragon.

So Satan goes after God - I want the throne, I want to rule and be God. God wins (always) - casts him down to earth. So He goes after God's people, the Israelites.

Which is prominently on display throughout the Old Testament - they are constantly under turmoil and attack:

- Constantly bombarded by enemy nations, who the text continually portrays as agents of satan, seeking to destroy them and cut them off.
- Consistently creating and running after false gods, idols, anything they can worship besides God.
- Time and time again turning their back on God, complaining against Him, running from Him.

Satan wants to destroy God's people.

But the text says for a specific reason. It's not just because they're Israel. It's because of what, or who, is about to come through this people.

Look back at the text, pick it up in v2 again...

2 She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. 4 His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. 5 She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, 6 and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

The Dragon wants to crush Israel, because the dragon wants to crush the child who will rule the nations with an iron scepter.

The woman gives birth to a son who becomes enemy #1 for the dragon.

The text says he is waiting for the child to be born so he can devour it. You hear remnants in the text of Genesis 3:15, the prophecy that Satan will bruise the child's heel, but the child will crush the serpent's head.

And if you know your Bible you know who this is referring to - The Messiah. King Jesus. Son of God who enters into humanity through the lineage of King David, born of a virgin Mary - to rule and reign forever.

Which leads us to Act 3...

Act III - Satan vs. Jesus

Satan tries with all his might to stop the arrival of Christ on earth. He hates it...

Why? Because the arrival of Jesus signifies something much much larger than a baby being born in a manger.

As we've been saying time and time again the past few weeks - Jesus showing up to earth means the kingdom of God has come.

We see in v12 that Satan knows his time is short. He knows his reign as the prince of the world won't last forever. He knows that God will reign and His kingdom will reign over all and through all and in all - so when Jesus arrives on earth - ushering in the kingdom of God, the devil knows time is ticking and his head crushing is coming soon!

And he hates it.

Eugene Peterson - "It is St. John's Spirit-appointed task to supplement the work of St. Matthew and St. Luke so that the nativity cannot be sentimentalized into coziness nor domesticated into worldliness. This is not the nativity story we grew up with, but it is the nativity story all the same. Jesus' birth excites more than wonder; it excites evil."

The devil hates Jesus because He shows up on the scene declaring - your kingdom is over and the kingdom of God is here to reign forever.

- This is why the first thing the devil wants to do in Matthew 4 is attack Jesus with temptation, deceit, lies, and questions. To try to get him to fold it in on the redemption plan of God. To try to get him to sin and turn away from his role as the perfect sacrifice for sins, which He resists.
- This is why as you read the gospels, it seems like every time Jesus is preaching about the kingdom of God, teaching about the kingdom of God, performing signs and wonders as evidence to the Kingdom of God - pretty much right after he has an encounter with demons.

Because it's war. Jesus is taking ground on what is rightfully His. He is declaring ownership of what rightfully belongs to God.

Until we reach this moment, on a hill called Golgotha, the devil actually thinks he's won. The Messiah is crucified.

And it's hard to grasp this feeling now because the story has become so bland to us, but when you reach that moment in the gospel narratives, after traveling all the way through the Old Testament - getting glimpses of this cosmic battle. Seeing time and time again the way that the devil has hated God, gone against God, attacked the Israelites...

As a 1st century Jew, you get to the cross in the gospel accounts and you're left asking and wondering:

- **Has evil been victorious?**
- **Has Satan finally gotten what he wanted from the very beginning?**
- **Has the Kingdom of Darkness won?**

And the answer resounding over history as the stone is rolled away is "NO!"

Even when it finally seems like Satan gets what he wants - the death of the Messiah, The Son, King Jesus - even that is the ultimate victory for the kingdom of God.

Jesus dies, but does not stay dead. He rises again, defeating Satan, sin and death. And ascends to the right hand of the throne of God where He's been ruling heaven and earth nonstop ever since.

Paul says in Col 2:15 - **15 [Jesus] disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in the cross.**

In a cosmic reversal that is hard to fathom and comprehend - Jesus' death puts death to death.

So having lost to Michael and the angels, having failed to destroy the Israelites, having been unable to stop the Messiah King Jesus, notice the dragon's last attempt against the Kingdom of God:

17 Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.

Because after he couldn't stop the Israelites, He couldn't stop the Messiah - where does the devil, the enemy of God turn - **those who hold to the testimony of Jesus - the Church.**

Act IV - Satan vs. The Church

This is why this whole thing matters for you here and now... Because if you are a follower of Jesus - **the devil has gone off to make war against you.**

Because He can no longer go after Christ, who's seated at the right hand of God the Father risen and ruling and reigning, who does he text say he will go after and make war on?

The Church. You and me and all who follow Jesus.

Isn't this the language of 1 Peter 5:8 - Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

He wants Christ, so He goes after you. Because if He can get you - to fall asleep, to give in to temptation, to not care about the Kingdom, to live a life that is more about your own personal kingdom than the kingdom of God - then you know who doesn't get the glory? CHRIST!

And what did the devil want more than anything from the very beginning?? To take God's glory!!

IN OUR LIVES

But what does this actually mean? What does it actually mean that Satan went off to make war with us, the Church, the people of God? Let me shift our attention just briefly to how this "make war" looks in our lives.

There's 2 main ways Satan makes war on followers of Jesus in this passage:

1. Accusation

Revelation 12:10 - ...for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

Accusation is the full frontal attack of our enemy. The devil works against you by making war via accusations.

Here's how this works:

Sometimes the accusations are against yourself.

This is his goal - to accuse you, and work as hard as he can to get you to agree with the accusation, such to take you completely out of the spiritual fight.

And in my experience, both in being a Christian and a pastor - these accusations are often rooted in **suffering** or **sin**.

At some point in your past there was a wound that was created - whether it be your fault or the fault of someone else - and the devil used that to get in there and slice it open and declare over you something that isn't true. Remember what happened? See? You're not man enough. You're not good enough. You're not strong enough. You're not tough enough.

He wants nothing more to believe the lie of accusation, because if you believe the lie of accusation you cannot have spiritual power.

Here's how this sounds:

- I can't be used by God in powerful ways, my past is too broken.
- I can't connect with God through prayer and His Scriptures, I'm not smart enough, I don't know how.
- I can't be vulnerable with my sin because last time someone rejected me.
- I can't share the gospel with my neighbor, I'm not good with people or with words.

Those are accusations He has thrown at you that you've believed - and it's crushed any ability for you to have any spiritual power in your life at all.

Because the devil knows, if you were to disbelieve the accusation, what a powerful force you could be for the kingdom of God.

If you start believing God can use you, you start getting after it in prayer and Bible, you start opening up about the deep idols and sin of your heart, you start trying to share the gospel - the kingdom of God moves in power - in your life and around you and in our church and God gets more glory as His kingdom advances in the world - and the enemy of God could not hate something more.

And so you know what he does? Shh...shh...shh - don't worry about it. You're good. Just go back to sleep.

Tell me that's not what's going on!? "I don't know how to study. I don't have time to pray. I can't share my faith." That's an accusation and it's not true and it's from the enemy.

And what does the text tell us to do? To fight him. To fight back. Accusations only have power when you agree - so stop agreeing. Fight back.

But there's another way he accuses...

Sometimes the accusations are against others.

He tells you lies about others, and you believe it.

John 13:35 - By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

Jesus says one of the primary ways we put the gospel on display is through our unity. Our love for one another. The way we believe the best in one another, care for one another, forgive one another, not gossip about one another.

So what does the devil do - "well if that's going to give God glory, I'm going to destroy their unity." And he speaks lies of accusations in your ear about the people in this room, across the circle from you at Community Group, about your leaders, about your pastors.

"You can't trust them. They don't love you. They don't care about you. You're not valued here. They're going to betray you, abandon you. It's not worth your effort, energy, or care. You invested in that other person and they betrayed you, don't do it again..."

Shhh...shhh...shhh...Go back to sleep.

THAT'S WARFARE!

Listen to me - some of you right now are believing the lie that people in this church don't care about you because of something someone offhandedly 6 months ago. And you've let it write an entire narrative about this church, about Christians as a whole, and about God. And I need you to hear me - that voice in your head that says "you don't belong here. You're not loved. You're not welcome." THAT IS WAR. IT IS A LIE.

And you believing the accusations has completely taken you out of the fight! You won't serve others, you won't confess your sin, you won't sacrifice and give - because you've believed lies! It's war!

But there's another way the devil works...

2. Deceit

Rev 12:9 - **who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world...**

Jesus would call him in John 11 the Father of Lies whose native tongue and language is lying.

Now, when you hear deceit, don't simply think of bad ideas or misinformation. Here's what happens in deceit...

The devil is after your heart. Why? So that you will begin to believe things that are not true and begin to doubt the goodness, love, and supremacy of God.

He does this through 2 primary ways:

False Doctrine.

He would love nothing more than for you to believe wrong things about the Bible, to start going against historic Christian orthodoxy. To start rewriting Scripture away from faithfulness to God and towards an ethic that fits what you want as a modern human in a secular society.

Can I be that guy for just a minute? When I was growing up my pastor was always worried about my friends. He always worried about who I was hanging out with that would influence my view of the world, my view of God and life all of that.

I don't worry about that stuff. You know what makes me lose sleep at night as a pastor - **TikTok**. Because I get 35 minutes with you on a Sunday to try and teach you from the Bible, but TikTok gets hours every day with bogus theology that would pick and choose the parts of the Bible folks like and take out the rest.

Look at me - that influencer on TikTok who's 22 and never read the Bible before but wants you to believe they're the authority on whether or not the original manuscripts of the Bible are accurate doesn't know what they're talking about.

It's deception from the enemy. It's war. There's nothing new under the sun. He would love nothing more than for you to do the age-old thing - we cut out pieces of the Bible or reinterpret them keeping the parts we like and ignoring or changing the parts we don't and it affects our ability to live vibrant, flourishing lives with God.

Because if you rewrite the Bible to fit whatever opinions and feelings and beliefs you already had, you know who doesn't get the glory in your repentance, in your changed life, in your cruciform dying to self life? GOD!

Tim Keller - **"Now, what happens if you eliminate anything from the Bible that offends your sensibility and crosses your will? If you pick and choose what you want to believe and reject the rest, how will you ever have a God who can contradict you? You won't! You'll have ...A God, essentially, of your own making, and not a God with whom you can have a relationship and genuine interaction. Only if your God can say things that outrage you and make you struggle (as in a real friendship or marriage!) will you know that you have gotten hold of a real God and not a figment of your imagination. So an authoritative Bible is not the enemy of a personal relationship with God. It is the precondition for it."**

False love.

He does this with Jesus all the way back in Matthew 4 - worship me and I'll give you all the kingdoms of the world - isn't that what you want Jesus, wouldn't that make your soul happy.

One of the ways that the devil deceives is by having us read things like Psalm 16:11, which says **You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**

And think - kind of, but what about...If only I had...maybe if I could. One of the chief deceptions of the devil is to convince you Jesus might make a great Savior, but He can never be your satisfaction. You need self-actualization for that. You need free gender and sexual expression for that. You need a new city for that. You need new friends for that. You need fill-in-the-blank for that.

And listen - if he can deceive you into thinking Jesus doesn't satisfy, that distracts you from being in the fight. Why?

Because you're a limited human with limited time, energy, and resources - and so if the deceiver can convince you something else is going to give you life and joy, in such a way you start devoting your all your time, attention, and energy towards that, what are you not going to have energy left for - fighting Him. Advancing the kingdom of God.

And listen I'm not talking about hobbies, I like hobbies. I'm talking about lulling you to sleep floating down the current of modern western society that puts everything in the basket of money, family, comfort, security, freedom, and ease.

Give your life away to this!! Chase after this! This is where true life is found!! Shhh...shhh...shhh go back to sleep.

It's all lies. It's warfare.

HOW WE FIGHT

So what do we do?

There is a cosmic war going on between the kingdom of Darkness and the kingdom of God. Satan, the enemy of God goes after Israel and fails, goes after the Messiah, and fails. And so the text says he makes war with the Church.

It shows up in our lives through accusation and deceit. He's the father of lies and a liar from the beginning.

And yet the invitation for us is not to shrink back in fear but to step up and fight. To do the work we see Jesus doing, advancing the kingdom of God in the world against the kingdom of darkness and the schemes of the devil that would lull us to sleep.

But how do we do that?

Look back at Revelation 12:10-12 - 10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. 11 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 unto death. 12 Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them!

How do we fight against our enemy? The blood of the Lamb.

We conquer, because Christ has conquered. We don't win this battle on our own. We don't just will our way through the accusations and deceit of the enemy.

What does Romans 8 say? We are more than conquerors! How? Not through will power. Not through human effort. Not through human ingenuity. We are more than conquerors **THROUGH HIM WHO LOVED US!**

What is our hope in the war, in the battle, in the chaos?!?! That Christ died! That Christ used the ultimate weapon of satan - death - to defeat death.

SO...

- When the enemy would accuse us - you're not smart enough, good enough, gifted enough, holy enough - we look to the blood of the lamb which cleanses us from all sin and makes us children of God with an eternal inheritance.
- When the enemy would accuse someone else in our mind - they don't care about you, they don't love you, they betrayed you, abandoned you - we look to the blood of the lamb which reconciles us to one another and unites us as the family of God.
- When the enemy would deceive us - God is not good, He is not kind, He is not caring, He is not for you - we look to the blood of the Lamb which shouts across history the endless mercy and goodness of God.

We fight with the blood of the lamb!

In other words - we go back to the gospel!!! To the cross and to the empty tomb!

How? Through prayer. We ground ourselves in the ancient truths of God through prayer.

- **Reference Practice Guide + Ephesians 6:11-18.**
- **Communion. Pray.**