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Series: For the Time is Near
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Who is Like God?
Revelation 12:7-17

The title of this morning's message is *Who is Like God?* That is a great question to know the answer to. It's a question that we should be regularly asking ourselves as we go about daily business, because with God we are more than victors! That was what we learned a couple of weeks ago as we went through the first portion of Revelation Chapter 12. We understood that Satan was being defeated over and over and over again. Now that theme continues through the latter portion of this chapter.

We know that even though things in the world are not getting better, as Christians, we have a hope that does not rely on chariots; does not rely on horses; does not rely on man. Whenever the Bible is referring to chariots or horses, it's actually referencing the power and the might of the military and of the government. We're in a time within the United States to where we don't know in what direction we're going to go. I just know according to Scripture that it's not going to get any better. It's actually, going to get worse. But we shouldn't place our hope in man; we shouldn't place our hope in the military, in the government, or anything else outside of Jesus Christ. He is our hope in our present day, and in eternity.

This is why as Christians, we should not live as others do. Especially today, I find a lot of people suffering from anxiety. Why?! Listen, I can understand if the world is suffering from anxiety, but why would Christians—those who know the Word of God, why would you be suffering from anxiety? Really, there's no real reason to suffer anxiety for long periods of time. I say that because I know that we fall into that place, we're stressed out. It's like things seem insurmountable; they seem so heavy, so burdensome. So, I'm not saying that we don't suffer some anxiety, but for it to be prolonged for us to wallow in anxiety is, at some point, turned into sin because we are not trusting the Lord and we're trusting in other things--external circumstances to give us peace, to give us comfort, to be our "savior", so to speak.

You see, God has a purpose and a plan for you. I know a lot of people refer to Jeremiah 29:11:

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." [NKJV].

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It's often taken out of context, but that future and that hope is not necessarily for health, wealth, and prosperity today. It's actually speaking of a hope that lies far beyond this present world. Your best life is not now. Your best life is in eternity with the Lord Jesus. It's not now.

Jesus was very clear: *we will suffer tribulation; we will suffer persecution; for we are not greater than our Master.* There's a purpose to it all. Some of my favorite verses are James 1:2-4:

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."

Why? Because that reminds me that if we are following Jesus Christ we are going to go through tribulation, persecution, and there's a reason for it. We should be mature in the Word of God, standing fast in the Word. *That* gives us hope because our final destination isn't here. Thank God, it's not here! It's beyond this earth.

This morning I want us to look at and hold fast to the thought and understanding, to the reality of being victorious in Jesus Christ as we go into what we know to be the most turbulent of times that the earth has ever known, or will ever know. That is described as the Tribulation Period, when literally all hell will break loose here on earth. Let me tell you that way of thinking serves, and will serve, the Christians on earth well. We haven't seen anything like it! We haven't even scratched the surface of what they'll go through.

Will that perspective help you and I deal with certain situations today? Yeah, they're tough, but will they not keep you on the right path and keep your eyes fixed on Jesus Christ? It will! That way of thinking is filled with hope and joy and an understanding. He is waiting for us, and we are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus our Lord, as Paul referenced in his letter to the Romans in 8:31-39.

Corrie Ten Boom said this, *"Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God."* That's a great quote! Don't ever be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.

There are very few people who have been shown the reality of the spiritual realm by God; John is one of them, and Daniel is another. If we were to take this spiritual realm more seriously and understand it, we would pray more earnestly. We would pray with more understanding, with more conviction, and understand that prayer along with God's Word is effective in Christ Jesus.

Even as Daniel prayed, God dispatched an angel because of his prayer. Did you know that? The moment that Daniel prayed, the Lord dispatched an angel. It was on his way to Daniel that this angel was stopped by the prince of the kings of Persia. He wrestled and fought with him for 21 days until Michael the archangel came, defeated his enemy, and allowed him to continue on.

Sometimes we read stories like that and we think, *That's interesting. That's encouraging.* But we don't really allow it to sink in and take it to heart, embrace it and really receive that, and understand that that happened! That's going on right now. If God were to peel back this layer, this veil that separates us from the spiritual realm, we would be amazed at what's going on right now. Satan doesn't want this to go on. I know for a fact that God has His hedge of protection over us right now, because if Satan had it his way--he's here to kill, steal, and destroy. He doesn't want God's Word to be proclaimed; he doesn't want the truth to be taught. Right now as

we're speaking there is something going on in the heavenlies that we do not understand. It's beyond our imagination, but it's reality.

"For we do not wrestle 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."

Ephesian 6:12

Cast Out and Down (vv. 7-12)

This morning we are about to have that curtain peeled back to see and understand what happens in the spiritual realm in the very near future, and in turn, will have a significant impact on earth. So, let's begin by reading Chapter 12, verse 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.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! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"

Let's stop there. Scripture makes it very clear that today Satan has access to heaven and the throne of God, which is amazing! He goes to and fro throughout the whole earth and he seeks someone to devour. He's doing that today, until this time that we read of here.

This isn't always how it was with him, though. He was once called Lucifer and was one of the highest of God's angels, beautiful and powerful, but he rebelled against God and was cast down and he took with him a third of the angels of heaven (we now know them as demons), and that's according to Isaiah 14:12-15. If you're taking notes you can jot down these references and look them up for yourself.

We are not told exactly why this battle broke out, but we do know that it was not between God Himself, it wasn't between Jesus and Satan. It was between Michael and his angels, and Satan and his angels. What we do know is that Satan and his angels were defeated and cast out of heaven.

The world teaches that you have Satan on one shoulder, and you have God on the other. They go back and forth. It's as if God and Satan are equals, and Satan is the antithesis of God. No, God is God. *Who is like God?* No one. Satan is created; God is the Creator. We need to understand that Satan is absolutely no match for God. He doesn't even come close to anything that God is.

God is omniscient; Satan is not. God is omnipotent; Satan is not. God is omnipresent; Satan is not. What does that mean? That means that Satan does *not* know all things, he's *not* omniscient. Satan is *not* all powerful, he is

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limited in his power. God is not limited in his power. Satan is *not* omnipresent, which means he is *not* in all places, at all times, he can only be in one place at one time, that's it. God is not limited to that, He is in all places, at all times.

Therefore, we know that during Daniel's time, it was Michael the archangel that was dispatched the other angel that had been sent to Daniel to battle Satan and to allow the angel to continue on to Daniel. We see here that it was not God who was doing battle with Satan and his angels, but Michael and *his* angels. Really, quite frankly, that is more of a match.

"Who is like the Lord our God, who is seated on high, ⁶ who looks far down on the heavens and the earth?" Psalm 113:5-6

Definitely not Satan. Satan was defeated at this point by Michael and his angels, and cast down, thrown out of heaven. He didn't have the power to stay there.

Satan is referred to as:

1. The Ancient Serpent
2. The Devil
3. Satan
4. The Deceiver
5. The Accuser of the brethren

Genesis 3 is where Satan is referred to as the *serpent of old*. Devil means *accuser*. Satan means *adversary*. These names have meaning. In fact, and this is going to stick, the name Michael means *Who is Like God?* Anyone who's name is Michael, that's what your name means.

It just amazes me that today Satan has access to the throne of God. He's there to do one thing, and that's accuse you before God of all those little things that we do. We come as Christians, we've surrendered our lives to Jesus Christ, we've asked Him for forgiveness, we've received Him as our righteousness, He's our Lord, He's our Savior. Then we begin to walk with Him. At first, it's really great, we're excited, we know that we don't have the same desires and all of a sudden, we understand the Word of God.

Before Christ I looked at the Word of God and it was all Greek to me. It actually is Greek, in the original. It was all a foreign language and I couldn't understand it; I read it and it didn't make sense. But after I was a new creation in Christ, it made sense and the Holy Spirit was my Teacher and He was teaching me, showing me, opening up my eyes to the Word of God, the truth of God. Then comes the reality of the fact that we're still sinners.

How many of you have been walking with Lord and thought, *I'm good now! I'm gonna walk with Him and I'm gonna be sinless!?* And then you stumble for the first time and you're like, *Oh, maybe I'm not so good*. Then you stumble again, and again. You know what Satan is doing at those particular moments? He stands before God and he's accusing you. That's what he does. He's the accuser of the brethren.

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Now, if he convinces you of condemnation, then you will pull back and you will not move forward in humility and ask God for forgiveness. You will instead, feel condemned and pull back. But the Word says that if we confess our sins that He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse of all unrighteousness [1 John 1:9]. That means that we are to humbly come before the Lord and ask Him for forgiveness. That is for believers, for you and I. God is right in forgiving us. Why? Because we are right as we're covered under Jesus Christ. What we need to do is confess those things before the Lord and He's faithful and just to forgive us of those sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Satan is the accuser of the brethren, but Jesus is our advocate before God and intercedes on our behalf.

"My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John 2:1

He's our advocate; He is our *perfect* advocate.

But another thing I don't want you to miss is the fact that Satan is also referred to as "***the deceiver of the whole world***" in verse nine. He deceives the whole world and convinces it that God's people are dangerous, divisive, destructive, and even deluded. In other words, we are the ones that are deceived. We're the ones that have no clue whatsoever. That's what *deluded* means; that we ourselves are completely deceived. That is the deception of Satan on the whole world and he holds the world in his sway. He is the prince of the air.

Let me ask you this: Is this not happening today? It is happening today! We're coming under persecution, and internationally we see it. Was it in Turkey where the suicide bomber went in at an Easter gathering? Pakistan, I'm sorry. Christians were targeted, specifically.

There are, of course, other times when we know Christians have been targeted, specifically. I'm sorry to say that I believe in America we are going to be targeted even more. Not just legally, or just by LGBT or by some kind of other organization, but we're going to be targeted more and more. The whole world is being deceived and pointing to the Christian and saying that we're divisive, destructive, dangerous, fanatical, and deluded.

But let me just remind you of this: Satan is conquered! Did you hear that? Satan is conquered! He is no match to God. Satan is conquered and we are victorious in Christ Jesus, Our Lord! How? It's by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of the saint's testimony. Those goes hand-in-hand. It is the word that receives the covering of the blood of the Lamb as a personal atonement for the sins of individual people.

We have to receive that! It's like having an offering, but never going to that place to where we receive it ourselves. It's as if someone is offering you a gift and you're like, *Hey, I acknowledge this gift; I believe that it is a gift; I believe that it's real; I believe it's for me; I believe that It's enough to give to me and to everyone else*, and yet, we fail to take that extra step and receive it unto ourselves, personally. That's what a relationship with Jesus Christ is.

I've explained to you how we come to a personal relationship with Jesus, right? I've walked you through understanding that our sins separate us from the Father, but Jesus Christ came to die for our sins and He atoned for them on the cross, and it was sufficient for the whole world.

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"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." [John 3:16, NKJV]

And if we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, then we shall be saved [Romans 10:9-10]. But if we fail to receive that for ourselves, it doesn't matter. It's of no effect to just have it offered and to just acknowledge it from afar. It has to be personal. The blood of the Lamb and the word of the saint's testimony go hand-in-hand.

It is our action as Christians that proves whether we truly believe or not. In this case, in the text that we just read, Christians love Jesus more than their earthly lives and are willing to give up even another day on earth, knowing that eternity is awaiting them in all of God's glory.

Let me ask you a question. What are you willing to exchange for another day on earth? Just think about that. What are you willing to exchange for another day on earth? What if someone had a gun to your head? What would you exchange for another day on earth?

If they said, "This is all you have to do. It's quite innocent. It's really between you and the Lord anyway, but if you renounce your faith, then I'll give you another day. If you just say, 'I don't believe in Jesus Christ. I don't believe in his death, burial, and resurrection. I don't believe in Him at all.' If you just say that, I'll give you another day."

Would you do it? For your family, your kids? C'mon, stakes are higher, right? Would you? Okay, what if it wasn't a gun? Because that would be quick. What if it was a hatchet? You could feel a little pain. What would happen then?

I'm asking you these things because we need to really understand that this was how, by knowledge, they would have the hope and the strength to continue on regardless of what came their way. There are people today that have been willing to have their heads sawn off because they knew their Lord was their Lord. Jesus was their way to the Father, and they were not willing to renounce; they were not willing to compromise at all. They were willing to go, even today, through torture and whatever comes their way.

Is Jesus truly your King? Is Jesus truly your Lord? Because it's *that* that gives you the strength even for the little things. If you can say, "Hey, listen, if I was before a person with a gun or a hatchet, or a saw, or whatever it is, I would not give up Jesus."

But why are we so willing to give Him up with the little things in life? Little things kind of derail us. Why is it that we're so inconsistent in our walks? Think about it. You compromise in the little things and you walk away from the Lord. It wasn't even a gun! But it was Satan deceiving you, distracting you, pulling you away from your relationship with the Lord. It wasn't even a gun; it wasn't a saw; it wasn't a hatchet; it wasn't even anything really serious. It was you yourself being deceived by the Enemy. We do that!

Let's come before Him and confess that to the Lord, and ask Him for forgiveness, and He's faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. He will place us on the right path, He will give us strength for today, and we will come back to Him in a way that honors Him.

So, the heavens rejoice because Satan and his fallen angels, his demons, were all cast out of heaven. But there is a woe that is spoken for earth because Satan is angry and he knows that his time is short, and there will be intense suffering for those on earth.

Israel and the Gentile Believers (vv. 13-17)

Let's continue on in verse 13:

And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. ¹⁴ But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. ¹⁵ The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. ¹⁶ But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. 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.

At this time, of course, Satan no longer has access to heaven and the throne room of God. Thus, his anger is turned against the earth in full force, beginning with Israel. Satan pursues "the woman", but she is divinely protected having been given two wings to fly and allows her to get away from Satan and is nourished where she is hidden for three and a half years.

Now, we're not going to go into trying to figure out exactly how that happens because Scripture doesn't tell us how, just that it happens. This is one of those things where we just need to leave it to God, okay? This is what's going to happen: He's going to take care of Israel for three and a half years, place her in some place, and provide for her in a divine way.

There has never been a more persecuted people on the face of the earth than the Jews. And yet, by God's miraculous power they have remained together intact no matter where they are forced to scatter to, or how many millions are murdered. That's a miracle in and of itself! There's not a people that would be able to endure those things without just being completely obliterated, but the Jewish people have been divinely held together by the Lord. That's amazing!

Again, here we see that even though Satan pursues Israel, he is no match for God. As God gives flight to the Israelites, they are kept in the wilderness, safe and sound. Satan, the serpent, makes one last attempt at destroying the Israelites by this river of water that pours forth from his mouth. But we also see here that the earth itself opens up and swallows that water that's like a river.

We need to note here, because we can go back and forth--*this is symbolic...this is not symbolic*. Let's understand this, we're not told that this is "like" water. This is a distinction that we need to make. It *is* water "like" a river. It's important because what John is seeing is that there's so much water that he's describing it "***...like a river...***". It's a lot! Now physically speaking, if you have a people in one specific area and all of a sudden you have this flash flood that comes, it can devour a whole town. We've known that to happen, right? So, why would we all

of a sudden turn this to be symbolic and say it could have been an army, or it could have been this, or that? The Word doesn't tell us that. It says it's **"...water like a river..."**. But God opens up the earth and swallows up whatever Satan sends their way.

"If God is for us, who can be against us?" [Romans 8:31].

This is all evidence of God's amazing faithfulness, His grace, His power, His might. "Go ahead and throw whatever it is that you have against My people. You're nothing and no one that can stand against Me." God has your back! If God is for us, who can be against us?

What happens next is that Satan after not being successful in destroying the Jewish people, turns his full attention on those Christians who remain on earth.

As we go back to verse 12, it says, **"But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"** He's square on focused on the Christians of the earth.

This all should be encouraging for us! It really should. Let me tell you this, condemnation is not of God. Condemnation is of the devil, because it leads to death. It's godly conviction that leads to repentance, which leads to life. If there is any conviction whatsoever that you're experiencing as we go through the Word, as we learn of it here on Sunday morning, or as you study it on your own—if there's this deep conviction, it's for your own good. It's so that you'll come to the place of repentance, which means you confess before the Lord, you agree with Him.

"I have fallen short, Lord and I confess, and I ask for Your forgiveness. Put me in that right place with You."

That is good! Conviction is good!

No matter what age we live in as Christians, we need to be prepared for spiritual battle. There are two things we need to hold on to as Christians to be prepared for *any* battle waged against us. It's what these Christians that are going to go through the Tribulation period are encouraged with. It's the same thing!

1. Keep the Commandments of God, which speaks of integrity and obedience. Or you could say, integrity *in* obedience.
2. Hold to the testimony of Jesus (confession and faith). Or you could say, confession *in* faith.

By keeping the commandments of God, we have a clear conscience before God, and there is nothing that comes between you and Him to keep you from walking uprightly before Him. Integrity in the Lord speaks volumes and allows you to freely move in His will. If you don't have a clear conscience; if your heart is not right before the Lord; if you have unclean hands, you will not walk right before the Lord. It hinders you, it trips you up...your own sin! Integrity is very, very important; integrity and obedience.

That doesn't mean that we're perfect. It means that we are pursuing that which is right, that we are making every attempt to live a life that is glorifying to the Lord, that we are quick and humble to confess our sins before Him in faith, that He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, to

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help us, to strengthen us, to give us His joy, to fill us with His Spirit. He said, "Be holy, for I am holy." We don't give up and compromise, but as Christians we need to be blameless before Him.

By holding to the testimony of Jesus we are confessing our faith and clinging to salvation in Jesus, as Lord and Savior. We need to cling to Him! Cling tightly! Like you've never clung to Him before.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast." Ephesians 2:8-9

I'll close with this: Who is like God? There is none like God, right?! There is none like the Lord our God! He is perfectly faithful. We need to put our trust in Him. We need to look to Him, to cling to Him. He is the God that is merciful, He is patient, and above all He is graceful, as He displayed on the cross 2000 years ago, and still today. If we come to Him with genuine hearts and ask Him to help us. He says that He will, for we can enter boldly into the throne room of grace and find help in our time of need. He's there! You just have to call out to Him.

I hope and pray that this is a word of encouragement for you, just as it was for them, for whatever it is that you are dealing with today.

Father, we are so thankful for there is none like You. You are worthy of our praise. We worship You, and You alone. I pray that none of us here would deny You for the sake of even having one more day here on earth. The apostle Paul said to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. There is no in-between. There is nothing else that we need to do but, as we confess our sins to You, ask Jesus Christ to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness ONCE, as we receive the sacrifice of the cross unto salvation. From there on out, we can look to You and walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lusts of the flesh, but that we would walk humbly before You, and walk in Your strength. You are our joy. You are our Savior, and we love You. Who is like You, God? In Jesus' name. Amen.