
Is the Path to God Different for Christians and Israel?

- No! Jesus is the One Unique Path to God!
- The Biblical view is that Israelites are the physical descendants of Abraham. Any person of any descent is a Christian if they are “in Christ,” which means through God’s grace being committed to obeying Jesus as Lord of your life, having faith in His resurrection, and having received the indwelling blessing of the Holy Spirit. Most early Christians were in fact Israelites.
- True Israelites can become Christians, but a Gentile Christian who is not a physical descendant of Abraham cannot be a true Israelite. The church is made up of people “in Christ,” both Israelites and Gentiles.
- To ultimately live “face to face” with God in eternity, a person must be holy as God is holy.
- To be holy as God is holy, you must be free from sin. Freedom from sin can be achieved only through Jesus Christ. Since all humans have sinned, a person can be truly holy only through the benefit of Christ’s self-sacrifice on their behalf. Every Israelite can be “in Christ,” but only those who grasp the opportunity will live face-to-face with God in eternity. The only path to God is through Jesus’ self-sacrifice.
- In the eyes of God, there seem to be two categories of humans. Those “in Christ” and those “not in Christ.” Being an Israelite (physical descendant of Abraham) means being a part of the lineage that produced Jesus, but it conveys no additional advantage for becoming “in Christ.”
- To be “in Christ,” whether Israelite or Gentile, a person must believe Jesus is the One sent by the Father to save His people and that Jesus’ self-sacrifice paid the penalty due their sins thereby opening the door to becoming holy as God is holy.

Revelation Part 36

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1. **Introduction:** Last lesson we began a 3-chapter parenthetical section of Revelation. The sequence of judgments will continue in Chapter 15 with bowl judgments.
 - The first section, 12:1-6, dealt with the birth of Jesus and Satan’s desire to kill the child.
 - Today we consider **War in heaven and victory on earth (12:7-12)**. Lucifer (now called the dragon) with his fallen angels fights Michael and his angels. Jesus is the key to dealing with sin’s penalties (death and the Father’s wrath). If Jesus can be destroyed, Satan believes he will successfully defeat God.
2. **Revelation 12:7-9:** *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.*
 - There are questions that must be answered to properly interpret this passage. First question is “when did this battle between angels occur?”

- The time of the battle in which Satan was defeated seems bounded by the text. In 12:11, the accuser (Satan) was conquered ***“by the blood of the Lamb.”*** The defeat seems to have occurred after Jesus died on the cross.
 - It could be argued that Satan’s defeat was in anticipation of the cross, not after. But, in either case, it is the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus that produced the defeat of Satan, a defeat that happened in our past. Jesus’ victory over sin and death came on the cross and in His resurrection.
3. **Revelation 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.*
- This verse celebrates the truth that after Jesus’ decisive victory on the cross, Satan’s power is strictly limited. He no longer has legal standing to condemn believers. ***“Thrown down”*** seems to mean Satan’s accusations no longer have legal or moral force. There is no place for Satan and his fallen angels to make accusations.
 - Prior to Jesus’ saving work on the cross, the accusations and slander of Satan had legal force because the sins were real and Jesus had not yet expiated those sins.
 - But, after Jesus paid the death penalty and absorbed the Fathers’ wrath due believers’ sins, ***“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”*** (Romans 8:1). There is no legal force in Satan’s accusations of believers. Their sins have been expiated.
 - While Satan is unable to change the reality of believer’s salvation, what he can do is erode the confident assurance believers have that they are and always will be saved.
 - A believer’s standing before God does not vary or diminish with success or failure in spiritual battles. But Satan makes every effort to convince them that failure in a spiritual battle means loss of salvation.
 - Continuing to have a “sin nature” after conversion, we ourselves are the weak point and focus of Satan’s attention. Lacking a legal basis, he simply presses on by pointing out failures, saying you can’t possibly be “in Christ” and do and say the things you do and speak.
4. **Revelation 12:11:** *And they (believers) have conquered him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.*
- This verse mentions 3 keys to spiritual victory over Satan. (1.) Victory through Christ’s self-sacrifice on our behalf, not our effort. (2.) Victory through speaking truth about Jesus even in difficult circumstances. (3.) Victory through a commitment to God so strong that even death cannot break it.
5. **Already but not Yet:** Until the consummation of all things, God’s kingdom is “already but not yet.”
- Before the consummation, believers implement the victory of the finished work of the “Lamb” on the cross by means of their faithful witness to Christ even to death. This doesn’t mean that every believer will be a martyr. But it does mean every believer must be prepared to die for Christ.
 - Those who follow Christ seek victory over Satan, by standing firm on the achievements of the cross, boldly proclaiming the gospel in the authority of Jesus name.
 - The point of the 2nd half of 12:11 is to reassure the people of God that suffering or even dying for standing firm in our faith in Christ is not defeat for the believer. Does it defeat to Satan? No! Jesus does that!
 - To “overcome” Satan does not mean to destroy him or his effectiveness (that happens in Rev. 20). Recall how Jesus was continually harassed by Satan after Jesus won the “temptation battle” in the wilderness.

- For us to “overcome” Satan doesn’t mean he loses the ability to cause you to die (through persecution). It means that through Christ we find the moral strength to say NO to sin.
 - Through Christ, we can hold firm in our faith to Him. “In Christ” our souls are protected against all harm.
 - Satan knows he gains major strategic advantage over us when he successfully sows seeds of doubt in our mind about our relationship to Christ. Persistent doubt concerning salvation will hinder growing in Christ.
 - It is through the blood of the Lamb of God that we are saved. There is nothing we, ourselves, can contribute to earn salvation. As in Romans 8, we appeal to the cross when Satan or others accuse us. Our salvation is Christ’s triumph.
 - “In Christ” we are permanently cleansed of the penalty due our sins and freed from the Father’s wrath due those sins. It was Jesus’ death and resurrection that once for all secured the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to dwell within us.
6. **Colossians 2:13b-14**: *Neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- Jesus is truly “Lord and Savior.” He is the one who triumphed over sin and death on our behalf.
 - It is important to note that events in the heavenly or angelic realm have real consequences on earth. For example, we see that Michael and his angels are more powerful than Satan and his demonic hosts.
 - Beale notes, “*Christ’s resurrection and the beginning of His rule are immediately reflected in heaven by Michael’s and his angel’s defeat of the devil and his hosts. Christ’s redemptive work on earth unleashes the effect in heaven of Michael’s victory.*”
 - The “**loud voice**” John hears is not further identified. It could be the voice of Jesus or of an angel, but the fact that the “voice” refers to Satan as the accuser of “**our brothers**” seems to point to the voice being the collective voices of the saints in heaven.
 - It is interesting how Satan’s fall and Jesus’ victory in 12:10 is predicted by Jesus in John 12:31-32.
7. **John 12:31-32**: *Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”*
- Satan was defeated by Jesus’ propitiatory death on the cross. Though defeated, he remained a ferocious enemy. On the last day when Jesus comes again; Satan will be totally cast out. Evil will be no more.
8. **Revelation 12:12**: *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!”*
- While Satan’s power for evil is curtailed, it will not be ended until Christ comes on the last day.
 - Meanwhile, Satan is very angry. He has great wrath, because he knows his remaining time is short.
 - In this “already but not yet” state of God’s kingdom, the decisive victory has been won, but not yet has the final eschatological victory happened.
 - Satan’s time before the last day is limited and his space of operation is curtailed.
 - He vents great anger against the people of the earth. That is the ongoing “woe” that will be experienced by believers until Jesus’ second coming on the last day.
 - Satan’s remaining weapons in that period seem to be (1.) the seduction of idolatry, and (2.) immorality.
 - When these two are combined with persecution, believers’ faithful endurance (13:10) becomes a necessity.

9. **The Earthly War Between the Dragon and the Woman and Her Children:** The cosmic war continues but now it is directed at the beneficiaries of the birth of Jesus (the woman's male child).
10. **Revelation 12:13-14:** *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.*
- Satan's power on earth, though reduced and constrained, remains a wicked threat. With his power to interfere with the birth of Jesus frustrated, Satan pursues those who benefit from the male child's birth (i.e., those "in Christ", the people of God).
 - In the first verse of chapter 12, the woman represented primarily the covenant community of believers in the coming Messiah. In 12:6 the woman fleeing into the wilderness for protection represents the covenant community after Jesus' resurrection. But it is the same people of God, the one olive tree, predominantly Jewish in 12:1 and a blessed mixture of Jews and Gentiles in 12:6.
 - In both 12:6 and 12:14, the imagery of the woman's flight into the wilderness draws on Israel's exodus from Egypt. The "*two wings of the great eagle*" alludes to Exodus 19:4b.
11. **Exodus 19:4b:** *"I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself."*
- The imagery of finding protection beneath God's wings is well-attested (Psalms 17:8ff; 36:7-8; 63:1-2; 91:4-11; 57:1; 61:4; 55:3,6-8, 12-15, 21-22, as well as Isa. 40:31). The point is that the protective deliverance and nourishment being provided by God for His people (the church) to protect against Satan's attempts to destroy it is in many ways like an exodus.
 - The protection is not necessarily physical. Many will suffer martyrdom. The "for sure" protection is spiritual preservation "in Christ." Believers will prevail "in Christ" against every effort of Satan and his minions. Their prevailing will happen but likely will be amid trial and tribulation.
12. **Revelation 12:15-16:** *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.*
- The serpent's persecution of the church is described in the vivid imagery of water pouring forth from his mouth attempting to drown the woman. One interpretation is that the water pouring out of his mouth represents Satan's attempt to destroy the church through deception and false teaching.
 - No matter how devastating the persecution of the church may be, Satan will ultimately fail.
13. **Matthew 16:18b:** *"Jesus said, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."*
14. **Revelation 12:17:** *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*