



Revelation Speaks Peace
UNLOCKING
THE SIGNS

THE GREAT RED DRAGON

What does truth look like? We live in a world that seems to believe that there is no such thing as objective truth. “You can’t really know anything *for sure*,” we’re told. But when you open the Bible and carefully compare scripture with scripture, and you allow God to put the brushstrokes on His masterpiece, you end up with the undeniable truth. “Nobody knows what the truth actually looks like,” we say—but God says, “Just a minute. When I’m finished, you will know.”

Eventually, our study is going to lead us to the “mark of the beast” (**REVELATION 13:16; 14:9**), but it’s important that we first lay a firm foundation. Bible prophecy sadly declares that there will be tragic corruption *within* the Christian church! Why? How could it be that corruption could be found within Christianity? That answer is found in the words of Jesus (**MATTHEW 13:24-26**). Satan, the enemy of souls, came and sowed tares (weeds) among God’s “wheat,” and Jesus said that it would stay that way until He returns.

One of the most important religious questions is this: Why in the world would God create a devil? The answer is spelled out in Bible prophecy. **REVELATION 12:7-9** reports that war did not start on planet earth—it started in heaven. God created His creatures—both human and angelic—with the freedom to remain in a relationship with Him or to turn their backs on Him. Why would God permit such a choice? Because real love *demands* a choice.

Lucifer, one of the highest-ranking angels in heaven, decided to exercise his freedom of choice. **EZEKIEL 28:13-15** tells us that he was beautiful and perfect until *iniquity* was found in him. God created Lucifer perfect—without sin—and yet one day, sin was *discovered* in him. What was Lucifer’s sin? **ISAIAH 14:12-14** elaborates: Lucifer fell in love with himself and began to covet God’s throne. The first sin—and still the root of *all* sins—was pride. **REVELATION 12:3, 4** indicates that one-third of heaven’s angels believed him. The rebellious angels had to be cast out of heaven (**REVELATION 12:7, 8**), because sin cannot exist in the presence of God—and prideful sinners would never be happy there, anyway.

So why didn’t God destroy the devil? Remember—real love demands choice. The only way God could guarantee that rebellion would never happen again was to let His creation discover for itself that sin is a bad idea. If God had suddenly destroyed Lucifer while he was telling everyone that God ran a poor government, imagine the impact that might have had. Many might return to serving God out of fear—not love. Others might secretly wonder if Lucifer had been right, and perhaps God was afraid of him. However, if God allowed sin to play itself out long enough for the universe to learn that it is a bad idea, Satan would be exposed as a murderer and a liar.

God has allowed sin to play itself out all these years because He is simply not afraid of the truth. He knew that if we were going to learn once and for all that we don’t want sin, we were going to have to see it for ourselves. He had to let us learn firsthand what rebellion does to us.

The war moved from heaven to planet earth. Satan managed to convince Adam and Eve that there was

something wrong with God, and they joined him in the rebellion. The human race fell into sin. That broke God's heart—after all, human beings were His children. He devised a plan to save them. In **GENESIS 3:15**, God promises to send the Messiah—“the seed of the woman”—to save the human race. Those who chose to would be saved by His sacrifice on the cross and welcomed back into God's family; those who rejected Him would remain a part of Satan's rebellion of their own free choice.

The Messiah was to come from the line of people who followed God. In Bible prophecy, God's people are often described as a “woman” (see **JEREMIAH 6:2** for an example). The Messiah was to be the seed of the woman; those who remained in rebellion against God would be the seed of the serpent/dragon, or the devil. Thus two sides of a Great Controversy formed on planet earth. These two sides showed up right away in Adam and Eve's two children—Cain and Abel. Abel chose to place his faith in the coming Messiah, and sacrificed a little lamb as a symbol of his faith in His sacrifice. Cain, on the other hand, merely went through the motions of a sacrifice, offering the works of his own hands.

These two lines of people continued to Noah's day, when the devil almost succeeded in winning every human being over to his side of the controversy. Were there any faithful? Yes! God found faithful Noah and his family. Knowing that hardened hearts would not turn back to Him, God started over—with a flood.

Soon after the flood, the two sides emerged again as Satan continued to deceive people into turning their backs on a God of love. The wicked began to build a monument to their own greatness—the tower of Babel—and even though God scattered them, the wicked city of Babylon found its roots. Babylon was a monument to human self-sufficiency and man-made religion. Planetary worship and astrology both came to us courtesy of Babylon.

What was God's answer? He called out Abraham to start a new nation that would be a beacon of God's love to the world. Yet the devil kept working hard. He managed to steer God's people off course several times (see for example, **EZEKIEL 8:14-16**). Yet *nothing* could stop God from fulfilling His promise to send the Messiah. **REVELATION 12:5** tells us that the woman's long-expected child (the Messiah) arrived, and the dragon failed to destroy Him. The cross made it clear that Satan was a murderer and a liar. It exposed him and attracted people to Christ (**JOHN 12:32; REVELATION 12:10-12**). There was little danger that the angels would be tempted to believe Lucifer anymore!

After Christ returned to heaven, the woman (the church) continued to flourish, and the dragon hated her. He turned his fierce wrath against her (**REVELATION 12:13**). In the beginning, the pagan Roman government worked hard to stamp out Christianity, but the harder they persecuted the church, the faster it seemed to grow!

In 312 A.D., the Roman emperor Constantine—who had been a pagan sun worshiper all his life—claimed to have been miraculously converted to Christianity. Suddenly, the persecution of Christians came to a halt, and it became fashionable to be a Christian. Many people who felt obliged to become Christians under Constantine were still pagans at heart, and so the beginning of a long history of Christian compromise began. To this day, many Christians simply compromise on truth instead of taking a stand—creating “tares” among the “wheat.”

What does truth look like? Tonight, God is calling us to stand on the Bible and the Bible alone for what we will believe. God won't permit the devil to continue forever. When Christ returns, there will only be one side to the controversy—the truth. Where do you stand today?