

Christmas Invasion

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Date: 27 December 2020

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[0 : 00] Revelation chapter 12. Hear the word of the Lord. A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven.

A woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.

Then another sign appeared in heaven. An enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads.

His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth so that he might devour her child the moment it was born.

She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.

[1 : 11] The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for one thousand two hundred sixty days.

And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and the dragon and his angels fought back.

But he was not strong enough and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down. That ancient serpent called the devil or Satan who leads the whole world astray.

He was hurled to the earth and his angels with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say, Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers who accuses them before our God day and night has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony.

[2 : 27] They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore, rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them.

But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you. He is filled with fury because he knows that his time is short.

When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert where she would be taken care of for a time, times, and a half a time out of the serpent's reach.

Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.

Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring, those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

[3 : 58] I hope you had a Merry Christmas. I hope you have a Happy New Year. The Bible is written to encourage us, to give us joy, to give us strength for living life.

I appreciated what Stan quoted from Chuck Swindoll about life is not meant to be drifted through something of that effect. That's certainly what we want to avoid.

That is one very fundamental reason the book of Revelation was written, because we all have this tendency, just as the church of Ephesus did, to kind of lose our zeal, lose our joy, lose our strength, lose our perseverance, lose our courage.

And the book of Revelation is written specifically to help people who are fighting that malaise, that drifting, to give them courage, to show them there's a battle going on, and you're in this battle, and you have to fight it.

You have to overcome. Every church that the book of Revelation was written to was given that instruction or that promise. You have to overcome.

[5 : 18] For one church, it was one thing. For another church, it was something else. But every person here, every Christian here sitting in the seat, you have something to overcome in 2021.

You have something that the devil is working in your life, that the flesh is working in you, the world is pressuring you, that you have to overcome.

It's only to those who overcome will receive the crown. So this morning, it's kind of a gospel or a Christmas message, not totally a Christmas message.

So who was the first person to ever hear that Christmas message, to hear about the birth of the Savior? Well, we heard the angels telling Mary and Joseph, but Mary and Joseph weren't the first people to hear this promised good news of the birth of a Savior.

We can think of Isaiah 700 years before Mary and Joseph ever came on the scene, and they were told a virgin would become pregnant and have a child.

[6 : 28] The people of Judah heard to us, a child is born to us, a son is given. We could go further back. We could go to David. He was promised a son that would sit on the throne forever.

We could go to Abraham. The Lord said, you're going to have a seed, and through that seed, the whole world will be blessed. And the Apostle Paul in the book of Galatians makes a very interesting observation.

He says, notice that that word seed is not plural. It is singular. He has in mind, Abraham, you are going to have one singular seed, and through that seed, the whole world will be blessed.

So Abraham heard the Christmas message. But Abraham wasn't the first. Mary, Joseph, Isaiah, all the rest, they weren't the first. And you'd probably say, well, I know who you're talking about now. Genesis chapter three, Adam and Eve heard the message. They were told the birth of the son. And if you were to say Adam and Eve, I would say you're almost right.

[7 : 33] You almost had it. The Lord wasn't talking to Adam and Eve. When he told them, when he spoke that first prophecy of the birth of the seed of the woman.

He wasn't talking to any human being. He was talking to the serpent, to the devil. The very first person to ever hear the Christmas message was Satan.

And it was not good news of great joy that is for all the people for him. It was his doom. It was his destruction.

The first person to ever hear the Christmas message was God's enemy. Adam and Eve overheard it, and it was good news of great joy for them. But it wasn't for Satan.

It was a threat. It was a threat. It was a solemn curse. A boy is going to be born, and he is going to destroy you.

[8 : 33] He's going to destroy your works. He's going to destroy you too. So if we're going to think about Christmas correctly, we have to think about it as an invasion.

Taking the war to the next level, because that is the context. Christmas is an invasion. The birth of Satan's destroyer. God is taking the war, the war of the ages, to the next level.

The next level. And the Lord of hosts is unleashing his greatest captain, his greatest general, the dragon destroyer.

That's the picture of Revelation 12, and that's the picture I want you to think about. That is the picture that we need if we are not going to drift through life. If we are actually going to fight with courage.

Because Christian, you are a soldier. You're a soldier. You're not a civilian. To be a civilian is to not be a Christian in the spiritual battle.

[9 : 36] I say that going into 2021. If we were to go back in time a whole year ago, we would have to honestly say we would have no idea what 2020 is going to hold.

And we would be right. Now we all have this inclination to think that 2021 is going to be somehow different. It's going to go back to normal. You know, there is no real normal in a battle, in a war. 2021, whatever it's going to be, whatever it holds, no idea, not a prophet, whatever it's going to be, it's going to be spiritual warfare. I know that much.

The spiritual war will rage on. You are going to face the flesh within. On January 1st, you are not going to wake up and have no flesh to battle. You're not going to have a world that suddenly forgets you and ignores you.

And behind it all is the dragon. And he is the God of this age. Jesus calls him that. The God of this age. The prince of this world.

[10 : 38] He is the tyrant of this dark kingdom with the great mass of humanity at his disposal, at his use.

People like King Herod, who slaughtered a town of baby boys just to get at this one baby boy. Because that little baby, he perceived as a threat to his kingdom.

But you have to understand that behind King Herod was a greater tyrant, a more wicked king than even King Herod. He was Satan's tool to save his much bigger kingdom, Satan's much bigger kingdom than Herod's little kingdom there in Palestine.

Herod was just the tip of the spear that Satan was using. And the devil, who killed a town of baby boys, is still alive, and he's still active, fighting you.

So Christmas isn't, and it has never been, about everything that the world is saying. Or making it out to be. It's not about being nice and compassionate.

[11 : 45] As nice as those things are, and as good as those things are. That isn't the spirit of Christmas. Christmas. And it's not a season of sharing. As nice as that is.

From a certain perspective, the Lord, it is a season of giving. We remember the Lord's gift. Christmas isn't anything like the sentimental pulp that all the Hallmark movies make it out to be. Where that channel, apparently, can crank out 40 rom-coms, all about Christmas and all about romance and totally missed the whole point of Christmas. Because Christmas is God's aggression against our mortal enemy.

The mortal enemy of our souls. And it's about war. The war of the ages. The war that has stretched from the very beginning that will stretch to the very end. The war that we are in. And I say, sentimental pulp will not give you courage.

It will not put steel in your spine in order to face the enemies that you will face in 2021. For you to seize 2021 with boldness, with courage, with persistence.

[13 : 05] It's not going to give you that courage to get in the battle and to stick in it even when it is hard. But that's what Revelation and Revelation 12 is about.

It's giving you that courage. Revelation 12 reorients our thinking. That's what it's for. It's to reorient how you think.

It's to capture your imagination. It's a revelation. It's a revelation. It's an epiphany. That if God will pierce your mind with what Revelation is about, this epiphany that it is showing you, that it will change how you see everything.

How you see the world, how you see yourself, how you see the church, how you see what is really going on, what is really important. Revelation is an apocalypse. That's a word that we've taken and we've used it to mean end times.

But that's not what an apocalypse is at all. An apocalypse is not some sort of Greek word that means the end of time or something like that. It means an unveiling. An epiphany.

[14 : 09] It's a revelation that changes you. It's an unveiling that changes the way you think. Now, you've all had, or let me put it this way, the Apostle Paul had a sort of an apocalypse.

He was on the road down or up to Damascus and something unseen became something very seen. and Paul's whole way of thinking shifted in a moment.

So, Paul's whole worldview in a moment just completely collapsed to the ground and was rebuilt in less than a moment. Everything about the way Paul thought about himself, about the world, about the Christians, about Jesus, everything changed in a moment because it was an apocalypse.

It was an epiphany. Now, you've all had epiphanies epiphanies of some kind or other where, I'm not saying you've had some sort of vision, but you've had a radical, like, oh, I see it now.

It could have been something very small. It could have been something very big. But suddenly, the way you thought about things changed. And your world changed. It just shifted a little bit.

[15 : 23] Revelation is designed to help us and to shift the way we understand things. Revelation 12 is a part of that. And it's what the churches, the seven churches that were originally the recipients of Revelation, what they needed, just think about them.

Some of them were rich. Some things, they were comfy and cozy. You know, it was good for them. That's Laodicea. Some were poor and downtrodden and beat up and discouraged.

Some of them were wrestling with false teachers. Some of them were dallying with idols. Now, that's us. We're all on that spectrum somewhere of dealing with spiritual enemies.

And we could be discouraged and we could be downtrodden or things could be just going great. But that's a danger. So we are all there somewhere. And so we all need this vision.

You need what Revelation 12 is showing you. All scripture is God-breathed, is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. That includes Revelation.

[16:32] So let's look at it. I hope you can see God meant this for your good. God meant this book to help you. God meant Revelation 12, what we're going to look at, to give you courage, to give you encouragement.

So let's look at it. Revelation 12, we're going to look at it under three points. And the first is we see the child's origin. The child's origin. The dragon's doom.

Where does he come from? Verse 1 says, A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven. A woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet and a crown of 12 stars on her head. And she was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. So here's this child's mother. Here's this child's mother.

It's not talking about Mary. It's not talking about Eve. Although Mary and Eve are certainly a part of this picture. Just look at this woman.

[17:36] I want you to, Revelation is meant to be imagined. So you have to turn on your imagination. And with a sanctified imagination, I want you to picture her. She's clothed with the sun.

So how bright she shines. She's radiant. She's glorious. And the moon is under her feet.

And their stars are like a tiara on her head. A crown of stars is on her head. And so she has, she's radiant with the sun. She has starlight shining out of her head.

She has moon under her feet. So who is this woman, this child's mother? I think we all recognize that the child is talking about Jesus. Who is his mother? Well, if you know the Old Testament, then you've seen these images, these pictures before.

The sun and the moon and the stars. And you've seen them all together. maybe you can think about where, where in the Old Testament do you see these three sun, moon, and stars put together in one picture.

[18:45] Well, one night there was a teenager. His name was Joseph and he had a dream. And he dreamt that the sun and the moon and 11 stars bowed down to him.

And he woke up the next morning and, and kind of a not so smart teenage mode, move or something.

He, he, he said, hey, dad, hey, to his jealous brothers, hey, listen to this dream I had. And they weren't happy because they, they recognized who those, who that sun was and who that moon was and who those 11 stars were.

It was them. It was Jacob and his wife and their children. It was Israel's family. It was God's chosen people, his Old Testament people. And they're all bowing down to Joseph.

And so that's where this image comes from. The book of Revelation takes it and changes it and puts it on this woman and makes it into this glorious woman. And so this, this woman is the Old Testament community of faith.

[19:50] It's the whole line of believers starting in Adam and Eve, but it's all those who ever longed for the Savior's coming.

So Adam and Eve and Noah and Enoch and Abraham and David and Deborah and all the just judges and Moses and Aaron and Caleb and Joshua and Rahab.

But not all of them as individuals. All of them, all of them together. Now some of them we know. I just named a bunch of them that we know, but most of them, we have no idea who they were.

They were just people like you, living in the Old Testament time, waiting for the Messiah to come, longing, praying for the Savior to be born.

and so here they are, all of them. Some of them we know, most of them we don't, but they're shining and they're radiant in glory and they're pregnant with the Messiah.

[20:54] They're pregnant with Eve's promised snake crusher. So it's the whole community of the faithful who fought and lived and died to see the Messiah come.

But it's not just the Old Testament community. It's the New Testament community. It's us. You're actually looking in the mirror, Church of Jesus Christ.

You're looking in the mirror when you're looking at this lady. Now, how do I know that? Well, it's because she doesn't die in childbirth.

It's not like the Messiah comes and she just disappears off the scene. It's not that picture. And that's what happened when the Messiah came. The Old Testament was done and now the New Testament came on the scene.

And so the community of faith changed. But this woman doesn't die in childbirth. She lives on and after her son is born, she lives. Now the dragon hates her and when he can't destroy the child, he turns his attention on her.

[22 : 03] So who is this woman? Shining with the sun, radiant with stars, with the moon under her feet. Well, it's the faithful. It's the it's the it's humanity longing, the godly longing in every age for the the Messiah.

So where does the dragon slayer come from? What's his origin? I'm going to give you two very strange truths, unexpected truths this morning.

and here's the first one. The dragon slayer, Satan's doom, is one of us. Is one of us. He's from us. I told you revelation is about helping you see things differently than you normally do.

Now last week we saw that the son of God, the Messiah, Jesus Christ, is God. God of gods. Light of light. So does that mean he's not those things?

No, not at all. But the child born to rule the nations with an iron scepter, the child born to rob Satan of his kingdom, is one of us.

[23 : 12] He's from us. That's what it means when he's called Emmanuel, God with us. This is how closely God has come to us.

He becomes one of us. So his origin is divine, but his origin on the other hand is very, very earthly. So he's a true Israelite.

He's one of the faithful. Just like this is the woman who is the faithful, he is one of the faithful. He's the true son of Eve. He's the man of God.

So who is Jesus? He's Satan's doom. He's going to rule the nations with an iron scepter. He's the destroyer of the kingdom of darkness. And at the same time, he is a man who believed.

He's a man who prayed. He was a man who read the scriptures. He lived with God's people as one of God's people. Not like he was one, but as one, because he was one.

[24 : 16] He was from us. And so everything that this woman did and experienced, he too himself experienced. He wrestled and suffered in hope.

And just as every believer waits, he waited. He waited upon the Lord. And he's still waiting. You know, we're eager for Jesus to come quickly, but I don't think we understand how eager he is to come as well.

He's one of us. He's one of us in hope and faith and love. And he's waiting to for God to say now. Now's the time.

Go finish everything that you began. Bring it into all things. So he's, he's one of us. Do you wait in hope? Do you wait in longing? Jesus does too.

He did and he does. He cried the tears of his people. He wept. And he suffered.

[25 : 24] He took hold of God with a faith that wouldn't let him go. Remember Jacob wrestling with the Lord. Well, here's Jacob, here's wrestling Jacob's wrestling son.

And the battle cost him dearly. We sang of that. Jacob limped away from that battle. That wrestling with the Lord. And we do too.

And Jesus himself could show his disciples his scars. The evidence that he too had suffered. He too had wrestled.

And so brothers and sisters, we are in a battle, but the dragon slayer has come and he didn't just come out of the blue. He's not disconnected and unrelated to us. we sing that song, all the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

Remember that Christmas hymn? All the hopes, all the fears, everything that we were longing for, all the Old Testament people were longing for, they're met in Jesus.

[26 : 40] The Old Testament saints, in their hope and in their agony, longing to see the Messiah come and at long last he was delivered in Bethlehem.

That's why old Simeon and old Anna, when Jesus was brought to the temple, they took him into their arms and they blessed him like he was their very own child, like he was their grandchild because he was.

Mary wasn't the only one in labor. All of God's people were longing and longing and in labor right from Eve right down to Mary, they were in labor to see the Messiah and at last he came, one of

them, out of them.

Now do you see how this helps you to fight? Do you see what strength and hope this gives to you? Because the snake crusher, the dragon's doom, is one of us.

he's one of us, a fellow man like us. And he treads down the serpent and because he does, we can as well.

[27 : 50] Romans 16:20 says the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. Not Jesus' feet, under your feet. Psalm 91:13, you will tread upon the lion and the cobra, you will tread upon the great lion and the serpent.

And James, the book of James says, resist the devil and he will flee from you. We are in conflict, but because of Jesus, we now have authority and power to resist the devil.

Now, how does that work? How can that be? It's because of who Jesus is. It's because we are united to him. We are connected to him. He is one of us.

He came from us. He's part of us. And so all the hopes and all the fears are met in need and night. So he is God of gods. And yet, one of us.

Strange. He's both God and believer. So then we can have courage. We can put aside our fears and our doubts. You know, the devil works in fears and doubts.

[28 : 56] That's the only weapons he really has against us now. And we're going to see that in a moment. But the truly devastating weapon of the law and able to condemn us, that's been taken out of his hands.

The only weapons the devil has now that can really do us any harm is fear and doubt. And they're weapons of shadow. They have no real bite unless we give in to them, unless we believe them, when we take our eyes off the Savior and we give in to fear, and when we give in to doubt, then Satan is winning and overcoming us.

And so we need to have courage. Courage. Just look at the church. And I'm not saying look at the church from our earthly perspective.

Greatly outnumbered. No political power. Not great wealth. Nothing like that. But look at the church as revelation is showing us. Stretched from beginning to end.

Radiant, dressed in the sun, with the stars on her head, the moon under her feet. Look at her. And as Screwtape said in the Screwtape letters in C.S.

[30 : 05] Lewis, he wrote this, this is a vision, the vision of the church stretched from beginning to end, that is a sight that puts fear in the most seasoned tempter. When Satan looks at the church and all of her magnificence stretched from beginning to end, it puts fear in their hearts.

So the world looks down on her. The world looks down on the church, scorns the church. But look how God sees her. Look how she really is. Glorious. And she will not be defeated.

She will not be defeated. Why? Because her son is the king. Her son is the king. Will Solomon let Bathsheba be killed?

Solomon is, Bathsheba is Solomon's mother. Will Solomon let Bathsheba be killed? Will the enthroned Solomon let Bathsheba waste away for a lack of protection and lack of provision.

Unloved, unprotected. No, she's his mother. She's his family. He came from her. Well, one greater than Solomon is here.

[31 : 15] And he's sitting on the throne of the universe. And so that's the child's origin. That's why we can have courage. Because of who he is and who we are.

Now, second point, look at the child's enemy. We hardly need to take any time here. Of course, the dragon is the devil. It says, so there he has seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns on his head. Those are pictures of his strength, of his wisdom, of his cunning, of his authority. Again, he's the god of this age. And he does rule, and he does exercise authority.

He is the prince of the world. Jesus himself again calls him that. And so the seven heads, the ten horns, the seven crowns, all show his oppressive strength.

He wields political power. And so we should not be surprised when political power is wielded against the church, because behind political power is the devil.

[32 : 17] We sing his craft and his power are great, and he is armed with cruel hate. His craft, that means his cunning, his wisdom, his skill.

They're great. His power is great, and he's armed with cruel hate. You also notice he's enormous, he's red. Why is he red?

Well, just like if you read on Revelation 17, they show you the picture of this prostitute, this whore, Babylon, and she's riding on a monster.

And she's dressed in red and purple, and she's riding on a dragon or a monster that is also red. And why are they red? Well, it says in Revelation 7, it's 17, because they're drunk with the blood of the saints.

She and her monster have filled themselves with the gore of the saints. Have you, you've seen those National Geographic movies where you're watching a lion and they're eating the zebra, and the blood is all over the lion's face.

[33 : 25] That's the picture. She's covered with blood. She's ate and she's drank so much that it's just not her face. It's all over. Her clothes are red and her beast is red.

And that's why he is red. Because this devil, this dragon, is covered and he devours and he destroys the saints.

He comes as the angel of light. He comes as the angel of life. But he's been a murderer from the beginning. It says he swept away a third of the stars.

That's probably, it's not exactly clear what that's referring to, but it's probably not a reference to the fall of angels, as so many have thought. Revelation very much depends on its pictures and taking its images from the book of Daniel.

And in the book of Daniel, the stars are the saints. And so we've already seen in this chapter that the saints, the stars are the faithful, part of the faithful community.

[34 : 28] So this dragon, he's destroyed a third of the saints. Many of them killed, swept them out, dragged them down. It's a picture of terrible violence, of this dragon.

And again, use your imagination. Imagine it's getting, it's dark. Maybe there's just a little bit of light still in the sky. It's late, late evening.

The stars are shining in the sky, and then a monster rises out of the earth, out of this darkness, until this enormous dragon fills the sky.

If you really saw it in real life, it would be horrifying. It would be absolutely terrifying. And with a lash of his tail, this dragon sweeps a third of the stars clean out of the sky.

Again, if you can imagine it, you can see how horrifying it would have been as John is looking at this picture of incredible violence.

[35 : 33] And that's who this child's enemy is. He's devoured and killed and drugged down countless of his enemies.

And so you see what is being set up. The child is about to be born. The hope of all the saints. The hope of all of God's people. They're representative.

And the child, or the dragon, hates him. He hates the woman, but he really hates him. So the woman is glorious. But she's no match for this dragon.

Especially in the situation and the condition that she's in. She's now so vulnerable. She's suffering. She's about to give birth. So what chance does a woman in labor have against this dragon?

What chance does the baby have against the dragon? So now we've seen the child's enemy. Now let's look at the child's rescue. This is our last point. The woman is on the ground.

[36 : 40] She's in agony. She's in pain. She's persecuted. She's vulnerable. You can just imagine her legs are apart.

She's bearing down in agony. And there is no attending physician. There's no nurse to bring her ice and soda. There's no loving husband to hold her hand.

You have a monster. And his jaws are wide open. Gaping. Greedy to devour. Greedy to devour this child.

Every fiber of this dragon's being wants to devour this child. world. And it's a terrible picture. It's a frightening picture.

But the baby is born. And we get to see who he is. He's the one who will rule the nations with an iron scepter. Who is this baby? Whose kingdom is he going to reign over?

[37 : 44] He's going to reign over Satan's kingdom. Over the devil's kingdom. He is the dragon's doom. He is going to steal Satan's kingdom right out from underneath him and take over the kingdom for himself.

He's born to wage war, to destroy, to crush the kingdom of darkness and the king of darkness. And so we're at the very moment of delivery.

The baby is delivered. And we say hooray. But no sooner has that happened than the baby is snatched away to heaven. He's snatched up to heaven. And we want to say if you're following, you're saying I was tracking all of that until this moment. It's sort of like when the record stops and you're like, and what was that? It's sort of we were watching a DVD movie and it just skipped 20 chapters to the very end. What's missing? The baby's born. We have the whole the community of faith and they give birth to the Messiah.

[38 : 45] They've been longing for him and longing to see him born. And he is finally born. And then instantly he's taken up to heaven. What's missing? Well, the whole life of Christ is missing.

What about the cross? What about the suffering? What about his death? What about the trials? This is all very important. It's all very important for us who are on earth. What about those trials? Are Christians sometimes brought up before trials that are unfair, unjust?

Yes. Jesus was too. The cynical, greedy, slimy politicians. Those were the high priests. The high priest's position was not really so much a religious position in Jesus' day.

It was a political position appointed by whoever. Sometimes King Herod, sometimes Roman authorities. The high priest was a filthy, rich person.

[39 : 53] And how did he get so rich? Well, his, the family business, so to speak, was running the temple. And so you have this rich politician slash businessman, man, and they just, when, when Jesus could handle the Pharisees, so to speak, you know, the Pharisees were not such a great threat to him.

But the moment he crossed the line with these high priests and these temple people, that's when, you know, two weeks later, he's dead, so to speak.

Just as soon as he began threatening their turf, as he became something of a threat to them, that's when they offed him. You know, there is nothing new under the sun.

So, what about them? What about the Romans and their armies? And their army of soldiers? They beat him to a pulp. They stripped him of all of his clothes.

They laid him down on a cross and they nailed him to that cross. And then they hoisted that cross up for all to see. What about that?

[41 : 02] Because I want to know all about that and I want to answer because that, as I look at it, doesn't seem like escape. That doesn't seem like a rescue.

And furthermore, if we are going to be faithful, we will be persecuted. Something, some less, some more, but we will be persecuted.

No Christian gets out a get-out-of-jail-free card. And our brothers and sisters around the world, they aren't getting get-out-of-jail-free cards.

So I look out and I see suffering, I see persecution, and the question is, as I look at Revelation 12, are we just going to pretend that the cross didn't happen?

That we just get to escape? That what it means to be protected from the devil is you just don't see any trouble. Because that's kind of what it looks like.

[42 : 06] Like, he got to escape the dragon's violence and somehow we will. Well, it's a riddle.

What's the answer? Well, I told you there was two strange truths. The first is that the dragon's doom, Jesus Christ, is one of us.

He's from us. And that's unexpected. He's divine. divine. And yet, at the same time, he's one of the faithful. Now, here's the second strange truth.

And here's how you thread that needle. Here's how you understand how he escapes the devil and at the same time, he died a terrible death. Here's the answer.

It's this. To escape the devil is not to avoid death and suffering. To escape is not to avoid death and suffering. To escape the dragon doesn't mean you avoid death and suffering.

[43 : 12] We can't keep our normal definitions and understand what Revelation is saying. We have to have a different way of looking at things, a different perspective. We have to have a sort of an epiphany. Escape doesn't mean no suffering, no death, no persecution, no hardship, no heartache.

It didn't mean that for Jesus and it doesn't mean that for any of us either. It doesn't mean that for the woman or for us. Escape means death and resurrection.

The dragon killed him and yet he escaped the dragon. And that's true for us. The very worst thing that the devil can do is kill us, but you know what?

He can't touch us. Jesus said, they will kill you but not touch a hair on your head. How do you reconcile those two statements?

They will kill you, but they won't be able to touch a hair on your head. It's the same truth that Revelation is showing us. To suffer, even to die, in faithfulness to God and his word is precisely how we are going to escape the dragon.

[44 : 23] That's what this is showing you. You know who doesn't escape the dragon? The ones he doesn't bother. The ones he leaves alone.

They don't escape him because they die and they go into the second death. they join him. Who doesn't escape the dragon? Those who walk away out of fear.

Who walk away from suffering. Who go AWOL in the fight. Who don't make a decision. Who will not stand up for Christ and their courage is not there and they're the ones who don't escape.

Those who look at the world and say, I want that. I want their ease. I want their comfort. I don't want to be troubled. I don't want to be bothered. I want their peace.

I want their ease. I want their luxury. I don't want to fight. I don't want to die. And I'm not going to. Those are the people who don't escape.

[45 : 31] Those who suffer for Christ's sake. Who courageously trust in the child who is now king. Who even will die for him. Those are the ones who escape.

Those who are the ones who enter into life untouched. Because they will rise to new life and their places in heaven and Satan can't have anything, can't accuse them of anything.

That's what you see in this loud voice in heaven. Now has come the salvation and the power. This is verse 10. For the accuser of our brethren who accuses them before our God day and night has been hurled down.

Why can't Satan hurt us anymore? It's because this, the only true weapon that Satan ever had to destroy people was their sin.

Their law-breaking. And if he could accuse them and rightfully accuse us of sin, then God himself would have to judge us. But now, what is pictured here is he is silenced.

[46 : 41] His place in heaven and in the courtroom, he's been driven out. He is not allowed to speak against the saints any longer. His weapon was the law and that sentence against us that the soul that sins shall die.

That has what, that's what's been taken out of his hands. It was torn out of his hands and it was nailed to the cross and so Satan has been disarmed and completely embarrassed.

And ultimately, so now he can't touch us. He can't overcome us even by killing us. And what Revelation is saying is that even our death destroys him.

Martyrdom is not something that we like to think about, but I think we need to have that, this understanding and this mindset that martyrdom hurts him far more than it hurts us.

Look at verse 11. They overcame him. They overcame the devil. How? Political power? No. Great funding, right politicians, Supreme Court, whatever.

[47 : 54] They overcame him? No, not by any of those things, not by money or by political power or by strength. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, by the suffering of the Lamb.

That's how we overcome him. And by the word of their testimony, the word of their witness. Witness in Greek is martyria. That's where we get our word martyrdom.

The word of their testimony. They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

Faithfulness, even to the point of dying, is victory.

Faithfulness, even to the point of dying, is how you overcome the dragon. How you escape him. It's how Jesus overcame him and escaped him.

He gave the faithful testimony. He was put on trial and when death was staring him in the face, he stayed faithful to what God told him and stayed true to the mission that God gave him.

[48 : 57] So that's the second strange truth. Now I said, this is what we need to know. And this is what we need to use to see if we're going to fight this war with courage, with hope.

We have to have our categories realigned. That's what Revelation is doing. Look out at the world, the church is the small, ugly, misshapen, powerless thing, and then I look at it from God's perspective and she's a beautiful woman.

The Messiah, destroyed by the devil, right? No, he escaped. How do you overcome the dragon? Not with political power, not with military might, but by suffering.

So two strange things, I said. We had to see, one, the dragon's doom is one of us. We are united to him. One of us is on the throne and so we can lean in on him. Every emotion, everything that we feel, he felt.

In this battle, everything that we go through, he went through. And so we can lean in on him. We can trust him and we need to. We're not talking and we're not relying on someone that just doesn't understand where we came from.

[50 : 22] He's one of us. And second, it's not death to die. It's escape. It's more than escape, it's victory. So I ask, like, what hope, what hope then does the dragon have?

Well, because of Christ, we are safe. Because of Christ, we are invincible. And though the devil hounds us, and he's going to, 1260 days, time, times, and half a time, though he hounds us and harasses us for time, times, and half a time, we are always out of his reach, that's Revelation's Christmas message.

Satan is doomed. We are protected. Christ is on the throne. And it's a call to faithfulness.

That's how this very, this chapter ends, to those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. that's what this is calling us to.

Not to something new, but to the same thing that we have been doing, to faithfully obey, to faithfully witness, to hold on to the truth, to boldly overcome.

[51 : 42] And so courage, that's what we need. And so take heart. Be strong and courageous. Because of Christ, we shall overcome. We are in a battle, and if we're just looking at the war, it's going to make us very afraid.

We need to look at something more than the enemy. We need to look at the conquering one who's on high. We need to look at how he looks at us. We need to understand what real victory is. It's not avoiding all suffering.

It's going through it and still holding on. Well, let's pray. Lord Jesus, we do give you all of the glory it's because you are on high that we have any hope.

It's because you are strong that we have any strength. Every grace, even the grace of perseverance, the grace of faithfulness, the grace of courage, all of that, you have ocean depths for us to drink, to take, to live out of.

We don't know what 2021 will hold, but we do know you are on the throne and we do know what you have called us to do, to stay faithful, to stay obedient, to stay looking to you.

[53 : 12] And so whatever this year holds for us, good or bad, we know that until the very end we will be fighting. so keep us from drifting, keep us from taking ourselves out of the game and sitting on the sidelines and make us faithful, give us courage, give us strength, give us energy when we are tired and weak, give us perspective perspective so that we can see the spiritual realities that are really true.

Help us not to fall for the lies and the mirages that the world and the devil and even our own selves are putting up in front of our faces, but help us to see things as they are and then to live according to the word of God.

We thank you, Lord Jesus, that you walked before us, you endured all things that we are or will endure. And so, we are looking to you and we do give you all the glory.

You are our strength and our help and our hope and we give you all the honor that you are due and we pray this in your name. Amen.