

Conquering the Dragon

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. It's good to be back with you. Missed you guys last week while we were in Seattle. And it's such a joy to worship God together.

If you are here and you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand. We'd love to give you a Bible that you can use. We are in Revelation this morning for our sermon. We've been in the book of Revelation, been going through it from the beginning to the end.

We're about halfway through. And we're in chapter 12. We just passed the kind of climactic midpoint of Revelation.

And now the rest of Revelation is going to explain in greater depth, with greater specificity, what the first 11 chapters basically, Revelation, meant. And so that's kind of where we are at the start of that, Revelation 12.

A lot of people consider this kind of the interpretive key to the entire book. Because if you understand this passage rightly, you can understand a lot of other things in the book of Revelation.

Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word.

[1 : 10] Father, glorify your name and the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, this morning, through the reading and preaching of your Word.

Lord, remind us of your salvation and authority and glory and power. Remind us of the great mercy and grace in which you have covered us, forgiven us by the blood of the Lamb.

Amen. Assure us of our place in your kingdom, of the way you see us in Christ.

Fill our hearts this morning with faith, with hope, with love as we live out this world that is full of tribulation.

Strengthen us to be faithful to you, to be faithful even unto death. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Revelation 12, 1 through 17.

[2 : 30] If you would please stand and then I will read Revelation 12, 1 through 17. 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. She was pregnant and was crying out in earth pains and the agony of giving birth.

And another sign appeared in heaven. Behold, a great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, and on his head seven diadems. His tail swept down a third 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. She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron.

Her child was caught up to God and to his throne. 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.

[3 : 40] Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated. And there was no longer any place for them in heaven.

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.

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. 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. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them.

[4 : 45] 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. 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.

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. The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman to sweep her away with the flood. But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river and the dragon that the dragon had poured from his mouth.

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. This is God's holy and authoritative word. May be seated this time. I noticed that over the last week or so, a couple weeks, there was a long, entertaining debate recently on our church's Off Topic channel.

[6 : 04] And about whether dragons are actually dinosaurs. John Buckley, Nina's I think in labor, so you have to pray for her.

John Buckley cited an article that claimed that until the word dinosaur was coined by Richard Owen in 1842, most cultures throughout the world refer to ancient dinosaur fossils as dragons or terrible lizards.

And apparently, as recently as 2007, some villagers in central China have been digging up dinosaur bones, believing that it's dragon bones and using it in traditional medicine.

And Susan Wang chimed in, noting that the Chinese word for dragon is actually in the Chinese word for dinosaur, which is literally terrible dragon or fearsome dragon.

That's what the word dinosaur is in Chinese. A BBC article from a couple weeks ago showcased a remarkably complete fossil that looks just like a dragon, an aquatic reptile that has been dubbed a dragon because of its long neck that matches the popular conceptions of dragons in various cultures.

[7 : 16] Whether dragons are actually dinosaurs is a tickling possibility that, as Lauren Miller noted, ultimately doesn't matter. But I do want to settle once and for all that dragons are real.

As Kendall Fowler wisely noted, if there are dragons in the Bible, that's good enough for me, y'all. And here it is. Verse 3.

Revelation 12 is the story of epic proportions, if there ever was one.

But aren't dragons the stuff of mints? What is it doing here in the Bible? Well, yes, they are the stuff of mints. But that's why C.S. Lewis once described Christianity as, quote, myth become fact.

And he defines myth in his book, *Miracles*, as at its best a real, though unfocused gleam of divine truth falling upon human imagination.

[8 : 35] The gospel of Jesus Christ is not only a propositional truth to arrest our reason, but it's a story, a drama to capture our imagination.

It's not only something to assent to, but something to delight in. The story of God's redemption of his people in and through his son, Jesus Christ, is the best story of all.

It's the original voice of which all good stories are just a faint echo. It's the original fountain that's bubbling over, of which all other good stories in the world are, but a small, narrow, little bit flowing from it.

Revelation 12 is complete with a great red dragon, a star-studded, pregnant woman, who gives birth to the chosen one, the Messiah, the promised king.

And it teaches us that we are the heirs of that king, the offspring of that woman, and that we must conquer the dragon by the blood of the lamb and the word of our testimony.

[9 : 41] That's my main point this morning. We're going to go through this passage and talk about the dragon and the woman and the king and the heirs, and I'm going to spend more time on the first two points to build a case for the latter two points.

First, let's talk about the dragon. Isaiah 27.1 prophesied, we read this in our cult worship, of the Lord's day of redemption, and that in that day the Lord with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan, the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.

Revelation 12 is a fulfillment of this prophecy. Prophecy. We don't know what the creature's precise genus and species are, but dragons are in the Bible sea monsters.

The sea is often a symbol of cosmic chaos throughout scripture, and one of the things that ancient people feared more than anything else was the sea. Why? Because you can't measure its end, you can't plumb its depth, you can't predict it, you can't control it, and many people died in the seas. And so at the end of chapter 12, this dragon is standing on the sand of the sea, it's coming out of his abyss in the seas to come in and wreak havoc upon the earth.

[11:00] And then later in chapter 13, the beast that the dragon uses to do his bidding also rises up out of the sea. So this sea is a symbol, a sign of that chaotic force in rebellion against God.

This is why at the end, after God's final judgment in Revelation 21.1, when God brings about a new heaven and a new earth, he says that the sea was no more.

So throughout Old Testament, dragons are associated with the sea, and also dragons are often used as symbols that represent evil kingdoms that war against God and his people. Ezekiel 29.3 calls Pharaoh the great dragon.

And Psalm 74.13-14 dramatically describes how God split the Red Sea and delivered Israel from Egypt and from the great dragon and Pharaoh in this way.

He says, You divided the sea by your might. You broke the heads of the sea monsters on the waters. You crushed the heads of Leviathan. You gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.

[12:02] So in a similar vein, Revelation 12 uses the dragon as the symbol for the devil, for Satan, because it is the most fearsome creature known to the human imagination.

And this is no ordinary dragon either. It's not the run-of-the-mill dragon. This is the great dragon, suggested of its massive power and size. Most of us, I think, would be frightened if just like a tiny bat flew in.

And it's hovering around our faces. But imagine a terrifying creature who in verse 4 says, With his tail sweeps down a third of the stars of heaven and casts them down to the earth.

This is a Godzilla-scale dragon. But the great red dragon of Revelation 12 is even scarier because it's real. We know that this dragon and the woman in verses 1 to 2 are signs.

They're called signs, which tips us off to the fact that they're symbols. They're figurative and representative. But the fact that they are figurative representations of spiritual realities does not mean that they are less real.

[13:13] Actually, the Bible considers the things of the spirit, things that are unseen, to be just as real, if not more, than physical realities that are all around us. It is described as red, likely because of the color's association with blood.

Later in Revelation 17, the great prostitute that seduces and leads God's people into immorality, the city of Babylon, a symbol of Babylon, is seen wearing scarlet.

And that color is explained there as because she's drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And unlike Jesus, the Lamb of God, who sheds his own blood to redeem the people of God, his people for himself, this dragon terrorizes and sheds the blood of others for his gain.

Earlier in Revelation 6-4, the rider on the red horse also symbolized war. Not surprisingly, red, because it's associated with blood, is also associated with war. It's the color of the Greek god of war, Ares, and the Roman god of war, Mars.

And this dragon has seven heads and ten horns, and on its head, seven diamonds. I'll talk more detail about what these seven heads and ten horns mean next week when we are formally introduced to the beast.

[14:35] The dragon's beast also has seven heads and ten horns. But for now, it suffices to say that this is an allusion to the fourth beast in the visions of Daniel, in Daniel chapter 7.

This beast represents worldly powers that are in rebellion against God, that oppose God and persecute his people. And in the Bible, it's associated with Egypt, Babylon, Rome.

I think, in our modern day, it would include states like North Korea, China, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and others, where there is severe, widespread, state-sanctioned persecution of Christians and systemic oppression of believers.

There are many others. We are told explicitly in Revelation 7.9 and 17.12, respectively, that the seven heads represent seven mountains or hills, and that the ten horns represent ten kings.

We'll learn that one of the nicknames for the city of Rome was City on Seven Hills. So then Revelation 12 here is teaching us that the great dragon, this ancient serpent with seven heads and ten horns, has been behind these sinful world powers and empires all throughout human history. [15:54] It's the dragon that lies behind the beast. It's the dragon that lies behind the false prophet. It's the dragon that lies behind the great prostitute. All three of them will be introduced to in the coming chapters.

They all do the dragon's bidding. This dragon that we see here is our greatest enemy, and he is the fiend behind all fiends. And the description of the dragon in verse 3 suggests that this dragon is contending for the throne of Christ.

Jesus has been described, already in Revelation 5-6, as the lamb with seven horns, referring to the completeness and the perfection of his authority and power.

And this dragon tries to do him one better. He's only a pretendent. He has ten horns, it says. Jesus is described later on in Revelation 19-20 as wearing many diadems on his head.

And here the dragon, too, is wearing seven diadems on his seven heads. This dragon is the one that Scripture veerously calls the ruler of this world. He is still under the ultimate authority and sovereignty of God, but he has nonetheless been given, quote, the kingdoms of the world and their glory, as it says in the Gospels.

[17:09] This is the one that 2 Corinthians 4:4 calls the God of this world, who has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

He is the one that, in Ephesians 2:2, calls the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. So, all that you see that is sinful and broken in the world, of course, in part, it has to do with our own sinful flesh, our own sinful nature.

But the demon, the devil, the dragon is also behind much of what is going on. This dragon is an illegitimate claimant to the throne that rightly belongs to Christ the King.

And that's why he is hell-bent on destroying the woman's male child, which is Jesus. In verse 5, he's the one who is to rule all the nations with the rod of iron.

And, of course, this dragon doesn't want anything to do with that. So he makes war on the woman and makes war on the rest of her offspring, in verse 7 here. He says in verse 4 that 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.

[18:23] Some people think that the dragon sweeping down the third of the stars of heaven and casting them to earth with his tail is referring to the same event as verses 8 and 9, where the dragon and his angels are defeated by Michael and his angels and then cast down from heaven down to earth.

I do not think that's the case, because here it's the dragon himself who is doing the casting down to earth. But later in verse 8 and 9, the dragon is cast down by others.

And I also don't think that, as some people think, that this verse is referring to the primordial fall of Satan and his angels. We know that there are fallen angels that have been rebelled, and they're recorded as being incarcerated in Tartarus in 2 Peter 2:4 and inbound in eternal chains under gloomy darkness in Jude 6.

I don't think this is referring to that fall of angels, because they're not thrown down to earth, but they're thrown down to Tartarus. I think this is referring to a different event in history.

I think it's best to understand the sweeping down of the stars of heaven as an allusion to Daniel 8, 9-10, which uses that exact language. Daniel 8, 9-10 is a prophecy about Antiochus Epiphanes, Antiochus IV, who persecutes and kills God's people in the 2nd century BC.

[19:44] And so Daniel uses the language of sweeping down the stars of heaven to refer to this earthly ruler killing God's people, persecuting God's people.

So I think this refers, this woman represents the people of God. And I'm going to demonstrate that more shortly. On her head, crown of 12 stars.

So this fits the Revelation context really well, because she has these 12 stars on her head. And we saw earlier in Revelation 1, that the seven stars that Jesus holds in his right hand represent the seven angels who are representatives of the seven churches.

And so I think this Satan sweeping down the 3rd of the stars refers to how he is persecuting and killing God's people. The 3rd is probably an approximate figure, a symbolic figure, but a sizable

chunk of God's people.

And the people that are being persecuted here are people who have their citizenship in heaven, and that's why they're a heavenly figure, and yet they are here on earth. That's why the stars are swept down.

[20 : 52] The dragon also tries to devour the woman's son as soon as he's born. This probably includes Herod's murder of the innocents, we see in Matthew 2, 16 to 18, when he orders all male babies, age two and under, in the Bethlehem region, killed, because he wants to make sure that Jesus doesn't survive, because he is the prophesied Messiah.

This likely also includes the numerous times throughout the Gospels when people, animated in part by this dragon, tries to kill Jesus either by pushing him off the cliff or stoning him to death. Happens many times throughout the Gospels. So this is the dragon trying to kill the male child, the prophesied prince as soon as he is born. But the dragon fails to destroy this chosen one, the Messiah.

The woman successfully gives birth to her, and then this child is subsequently caught up to God and to his throne. So Satan loses his bid for the throne.

Jesus still ascends to the heavens to occupy his right place at the right hand of the Father to rule forever. And Satan's earthly defeat at the hand of Jesus then is enforced and executed in heaven by Michael and his angels who defeat the dragon and his angels and cast them down to earth.

[22 : 17] He says in verse 9, The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. Now, but that doesn't mean that the dragon is done.

Now, it says 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. Having failed in his attempt to kill the prince, he now goes after the mother and the rest of her offspring.

The word pursue here is the same Greek word that's often translated in the New Testament to mean persecute, especially in the book of Acts. Persecuting God's people, and I think that's exactly what this is meaning here.

The woman representing the people of God being persecuted. But the woman is also protected by God. So it says in verse 17, Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on her rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus.

I'll explain more shortly what it means if the woman is protected, but her offspring are not in some way. But right now, I just want to focus on this reality of the dragon and the spiritual war.

[23 : 26] Right now, there is a great red dragon who is pursuing us and champing at the bits to destroy us.

Oh, how differently we would live if we actually believe that? Ephesians 6, 12-13 exhorts us, 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. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. In one of his podcasts, I don't actually listen to his podcast, but I just came across it in an article, Jocko Willink, former commander of the U.S. Navy SEALs, was asked how when he was out in the field in war, he managed to wake up at 4.30 in the morning every day to exercise and work out and train for the battlefield.

And his response was very simple. I know that somewhere out there, another man is also preparing, and that man is the enemy. If you know that you have an enemy out there who's trying to kill you, you bet that you're going to train hard.

But our enemy is so much more than a soldier with a gun. He is the great red dragon who's prowling like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour, 1 Peter 5.80.

[25 : 13] He's out there, right now. Have you put on the whole armor of God? We're supposed to take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, by praying at all times in the Spirit with all prayer and supplications.

But I think it's quite fitting. I think our women's ministry had a social gathering yesterday, and they did a fun activity called sword drills, where they, I think, are supposed to find something in the Bible quickly.

I guess it's a sword drill because this is the sword of the Spirit. I like it, yeah. And do you have your sword at the ready? Does the Word of God reside in your mind and in your heart?

Are you fitting yourself with God's armor through prayer? Because that dragon is out there. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 2.11, we must not be outwitted by Satan or be ignorant of his designs.

We can't just saunter out into the battlefield and just hoping that we're going to be lucky. We need to be aware of the schemes of the enemy and how does our enemy work.

[26 : 23] His names give us a clue as to how this dragon works. He's called the ancient serpent, according to Genesis 3, the deceiver of the whole world in verse 9.

One of the main weapons of this great dragon is deception. The title ancient serpent, referring to Genesis 3, where at the Garden of Eden, the serpent deceives Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

He impugns the character of God, slanders God's character and says, God is withholding this good thing from you which will make you more like him and open your eyes. He slanders God and accuses God and then he lies and sells poison.

death that seems to rest to humanity and all creation. That ancient serpent, that's his strategy. 2 Corinthians 11 speaks to how Satan spreads a different gospel and imparts to people a different spirit just as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning.

He uses, as 2 Thessalonians 2 tells us, false signs and wonders and all wicked deception. He is a liar and a father of lies, as Jesus called him, John 8, 3, 4.

[27 : 40] The enemy will lie to you about God's character and he will lie to you about God's word. He will lie to you saying that God is not good, that he is not sovereign, that he is not loving.

He will lie to you saying that God's word is not true, that it's in your best interest to live according to your own will, not according to the word of God.

Beware of the great dragon's lies. The dragon is also called the devil and Satan. And he's described in verse 10 as the accuser of our brothers who accuses them day and night before our God.

These titles, devil is a Greek word, Satan is a Hebrew word. They both refer to this meaning of slanderer or accuser. That's what the devil is.

That's what Satan is. He accuses. Remember in the book of Job how he slithers into the court of heaven and then accuses Job before God?

[28 : 50] He doesn't love you. He doesn't want to obey you. He's only doing that because you've given him all these good gifts. Take them away. Take his children away. Take his wealth away.

Take his health away. And he will defy you and blaspheme you to your face. That's what Satan does. He accuses the saints of God. You see that in the book of Job. He does it again in Zechariah 3 when he accuses before God's heavenly court that Joshua, the high priest, not any just Israelite, a high priest, the holiest person really in that community and says he is unclean, unfit to be a high priest.

That's his MO, accusing the people of God. Even though, as we'll see, he has been overthrown from the heavenly court, he's not stopped accusing us to be in our midst.

He accuses our brothers and sisters to us and he accuses us. Have you ever had just a sinister accusatory thought about a Christian brother or sister in the church just starkly sneaking into your mind?

That's how he sows dissension. And be wary also of condemning accusations that are leveled directly against you.

[30 : 13] The Holy Spirit does, yes, convict us of sin, but the Holy Spirit never condemns the people of God. If you have already repented of your sins and you have put your faith in Jesus Christ but you are still feeling this nagging accusations, condemnation, and dejection from God, that is not the voice of the Lamb.

That's the voice of the dragon. Beware of the dragon's schemes. Our battle is not against flesh and blood. Now that's the dragon.

Let's look more closely at the woman. It says in verses 1 to 2, 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 12 stars.

She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains at the agony of giving birth. Now at first glance, we might begin to think that this woman is married, since she is, after all, the woman who gave birth to Jesus, the Messiah.

However, there are several decisive clues here that point us in a different direction. First, we know that this is not a liberal woman, but a figurative woman because she was called a sign in verse 1, a symbol.

[31 : 27] Second, later on in verse 6, this woman flees into the wilderness where she has a place prepared by God, and we don't ever see Mary do this in the Gospels after giving birth to Jesus.

Third, in verse 17, we are told that the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring. And who are the rest of her offspring? On those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

If the woman is Mary, then the rest of her offspring would be Jesus' half-brothers, James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon, and Jesus' sisters who are mentioned in Mark 6, 3.

But nowhere in the Gospels do we see Satan specifically targeting Jesus' biological siblings.

Rather, verse 17 identifies the rest of her offspring as the people of God, those who hold to the testimony of Jesus, the church, the gathering of Christians.

So this woman is not Mary, but she's a figure for the covenant people of God, of whose stream the New Testament church is also a part. Mary is a special member of the people of God.

[32 : 35] Remember, Angel Gabriel called her O favored one. The Lord is with you. She is a special member of the church of God. She's included in this woman, but we cannot equate Mary with this woman.

That the woman stands for the people of God is confirmed by the description in verse 1. She is clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of 12 stars. This recalls Genesis 37 where Joseph tells his father, Jacob, the dream that he just had.

And in the dream, the sun, the moon, and the 11 stars come and bow down to Joseph. And Jacob immediately interprets this as sun representing him, the moon representing his wife, Joseph's mother, Rachel, and then 11 stars representing the rest of his sons, 11 sons, coming back to bow down to the 12 star, which is Joseph.

Joseph. And so there's already this connection that these images represent the people of God because Jacob, renamed later Israel, is the one from whom the 12 tribes of Israel come.

His 12 sons make up the 12 tribes. So, and this is why Jesus says, specifically in John 4, 22, that salvation is from the Jews. This is the covenant people of God connected to the old covenant.

[33 : 54] Now, the authors of scripture also frequently describe God's people figuratively as a woman, even as God's wife in several places. And citing the prophecy of Isaiah 54, 1, Paul writes in Galatians 4, 26 to 27, but the Jerusalem above is free.

He's talking about heavenly Jerusalem, a heavenly people of God. Jerusalem above is free and she is our mother, he says. For it is written, rejoice, O bear the one who does not bear.

Break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor. For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband. The old covenant people of God were like a barren woman who has failed to be fruitful and bear children.

However, this prophecy predicts a time when she will no longer be the desolate one, but whether she will be a fruitful one and have many children and that prophecy is fulfilled by the coming of Jesus and all those who follow him thereafter.

So, this woman that Paul calls our mother, Jerusalem, represents the people of God and this woman now also includes the covenant, the new covenant people of God, the church, since the church is part of that same stream of God's people and this woman continues to live after Jesus' ascension to his heavenly throne.

[35 : 13] This is why in 2 John 1, John addresses the church figuratively as the elect lady and her children. This is a common biblical image.

But this raises a question. If both the woman and the rest of her offspring refer to God's people, how can it be that the woman is protected and nourished in the wilderness while the dragon makes war on the rest of her offspring?

Notice how verse 6 says that the woman flees to the wilderness to a place prepared by God which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days. This is talking about the same thing as verse 14 where 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.

Now we're getting into heady territory again. A lot of you guys are with me for Revelation 11. If you want more details you can go listen to that sermon. But this is a time, times and half a time is a

year, two years and half a year.

So it's three and a half years half of a seven year period which refers to a complete perfect period of time. This is an allusion to Daniel 12.7 which prophesied that the end of the world would be preceded by a time times and half a time.

[36 : 37] And that's the same time frame as 1,260 days. If you count 30 days to a month and that's how many days there are in three and a half years 1,260.

But while this woman is immune to the dragon's attack verse 17 tells us that the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring and on those who keep the comets of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

Later in Revelation 13.5-7 we're told that the dragon's beast is given authority for 42 months to blaspheme the name of God and to persecute God's people and to conquer the saints to make war on the saints and to conquer them.

So Satan is able to make war on the saints and conquer them and he does this for the exact same time period 42 months which is 1,260 days which is a time times and half a time three and a half years.

What's going on here in chapters 12-13 parallel what we saw in chapter 11 verses 1-14 where the holy city which represents God's people is trampled for 42 months but the two witnesses which also represent the church are protected and given authority to prophesy for 1,260 days.

[37 : 59] So John is using these two different time expressions 42 months and 1,260 days to refer to the same time period in order to express this tension between the two dueling realities that on the one hand church bears witness but on the other hand the devil blasphemes.

On the one hand God protects the church spiritually but on the other hand Satan persecutes the church and destroys the church physically. The church bears witness to Jesus for 1,060 days Satan blasphemes for 42 months.

The church is protected in the wilderness for 1,060 days but the beast makes war against the saints and conquers them for 42 months. So they're just same time period but referring to the two dueling realities in tension.

This is why we as people of God are afflicted but not crushed perplexed but not driven to despair persecuted but not forsaken struck down but not destroyed.

We carry in our physical bodies the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus the spiritual life of Jesus may be manifest through us. Our outer self is wasting away like the outer temple in chapter 11 that's trampled.

[39 : 19] However, the inner self is protected and measured by God and has been renewed day by day. So speaking of the woman represents the redeemed people of God we are even now Ephesians 2,6 tells us reigning with Christ spiritually participating in his reign in the heavenly places because we are in Christ and Christ is at the right hand of the Father.

So then this woman represents this idealized heavenly spiritual reality of the redeemed people of God. That's why she's clothed with the sun, moon, and the crown with 12 stars.

But even though the physical reality of the woman the church on earth which is represented by her offspring is persecuted and vulnerable this heavenly spiritual reality is protected and invulnerable.

This is an amazing truth. We're protected. We're nourished by God. Despite all the fury of the dragon we are protected and nourished by God in the wilderness in the same way the Israelites were protected and nourished in the wilderness after God crushed the dragon the great dragon Pharaoh and delivered them through the Leviathan in the Red Sea and then brought them into the wilderness.

That's what we're seeing here. The end time exodus happening again. God nourishes people with manna in the wilderness so likewise will be nourished spiritually by the bread of God which is Jesus Christ.

[40 : 52] This also follows the pattern we see in the life of Moses and Elijah. I mentioned to you that the two witnesses in Revelation 11 are patterned after prophet Elijah and Moses and Elijah and Moses both had periods in their life where they fled a king that was trying to kill them.

Moses was fleeing from Pharaoh. Elijah was fleeing from Queen Jezebel and they both flee into the wilderness and there they are nourished and protected by God. That's what's going to happen to us.

It says in verse 14 the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness. That's again Exodus imagery. Exodus 19 4 God says to the Israelites you yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself.

It's a beautiful image. A few years ago while we were visiting my parents in Washington State we took a family trip to Kamano Island State Park.

Whenever we go to state parks or national parks we like to go birding because we like birds. We like to watch birds. On one of those trips we got to see a bald eagle and a bald eagle that was just flying in these continuous spirals like circles just higher and higher and higher.

[42 : 15] That's what people call riding thermals. Birds riding the updrafts of warm air by circling around like this so it can hover to very high altitudes without expanding too much of its energy.

That's what that eagle was doing. It's the first time I've ever seen that. This eagle was doing that and we just stared on for minutes and it just went higher and higher and higher until it was just a speck in the sky and I couldn't see anything anymore.

I'd never seen a bird fly that high before. that eagle is untouchable. Like what are you going to do? You're going to try to shoot that eagle? Nothing can touch that eagle.

And that's the reality of the people of God given the great wings of the eagle to fly away to be protected and nourished in the wilderness. Who's going to touch us?

This great dragon can do nothing to harm us. Look at how lopsided this picture is. On the one hand, you've got a pregnant woman. Imagine a pregnant woman.

[43 : 26] How vulnerable is she? She can't run. She certainly can't fight. And then you got this dragon on the other hand. She's just waiting for the baby to be born and he's just going to devour that baby.

I imagine him like a bull just like piling the ground and just getting ready to charge as soon as the baby is born. And yet he can do nothing to stop the destiny of this king, this child king.

He can do nothing to harm this woman who is spiritually invulnerable. Why? Because even if the devil can kill our bodies, he can never kill our souls or threaten our eternal life because as Colossians 3, 3 says, our life is hidden with Christ in God.

The dragon might steal or destroy our possessions, he might take away everything that we have, but he cannot touch our inheritance that is imperishable and undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for us, 1 Peter 1, 4.

This gives us great confidence to bear witness to Jesus, even in the midst of persecution, because we honestly have nothing to us. This picture of the woman also reveals just how God sees us and cherishes us.

[44 : 49] There's a family resemblance between this woman and Jesus. In John's vision of Jesus in chapter 1, verse 16, Jesus held seven stars and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

So there's a family resemblance with this woman who is clothed with the sun and has a crown of 12 stars on her head. Well, that's because she is related to Jesus. She is the bride of the Lamb who will be introduced to us formally in Revelation 21, the wife of the Lamb in all her dazzling splendor. And isn't it wonderful that this is the way Jesus sees his people, the church? Imagine a woman clothed with the sun. A bride in her clean white wedding gown looks beautiful, but it's nothing like the sun.

the radiance, the brilliance, the glory of sun, the purity of its shining forth. Wow, that's what this woman is like.

She has a crown of 12 stars. I imagine that these stars are far bigger and brighter than the most costly and precious diamonds known to man. This woman is beautiful, pure, she has unhindered brilliance all around.

[46 : 08] Sometimes I think we as Christians think of ourselves as the church of Christ, we think of the church as this lowly, shabby whore with raggedy soiled clothes.

And we ask ourselves, why would Jesus ever want to be our husband? what would Jesus want anything to do with me? Well, that's true, but only partly true.

That's what we all once were. Because we had sinned against God, because we had rebelled against Him, because we had gone after idols and worshipped, instead of worshipping God our Creator, we had worshipped creatures, we had worshipped ourselves and lived for ourselves instead of living for God.

So we were like prostitutes or unfaithful wife that had gone after strangers. And yet, Jesus, the Son of God, came to redeem His bride for Himself.

And He accomplished that by the blood of the Lamb, by His own blood, as it says in verse 11. Because Christ loved the church, and He gave Himself for her, for His bride, as it says in Ephesians 5, 25 to 27, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word, so He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

[47 : 50] Don't ever forget the splendid glory of the church of Christ that has been justified and sanctified by the blood of Christ.

That's who we are. That is our destiny. That's how God sees us in Christ. That brings me to my third point, the king.

The entire earthly life of Jesus is telescoped into this single verse, verse five. She gave birth to a male child, one is to rule all the nations with the rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to His throne, so that the dragon could not devour Him.

The destiny of this Christ child was already prophesied in Psalm 2, 7 to 9, which said that the Messiah, whom God calls my son, will rule over the nations with a rod of iron.

But prophecy concerning this chosen one goes even further back to the very beginning, to Genesis 3, right after the fall of humanity, after they sinned, deceived by the serpent, by the dragon, and took the fruit that they weren't supposed to take, this is God's judgment that He pronounces over the serpent in Genesis 3, 15.

[49 : 04] I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel. This is what pastors and theologians call the proto-evangelion, the first gospel, the very first glimmer of God's redemptive plan.

We see the enmity clearly between the woman and the dragon, and we also see how Jesus is going, He inflicts a fatal blow to the ancient serpent, the dragon, by bruising His head, but He also will suffer, because His heel will be bruised.

This is fulfilled in Jesus' death on the cross, yet as a sacrificial Lamb of God, He takes our place, bears the punishment and the wrath that we deserve on the cross.

And it's because of His sacrifice that by the blood of the Lamb that we are cleansed and we are redeemed, and after redeeming us in that way, Jesus resurrects on the third day, He is caught up to heaven to reign with God at the right hand of the Father, and that's what verse 5 is referring to, He's caught up to heaven, to His throne.

And as a result of these events on earth, the corresponding event happens in heaven, where Satan and his angels are then expelled, cast down from heaven to earth, as we saw earlier in verses 7 to 9.

[50 : 36] This is referring to what Jesus has done. That's why it says in verse 10, which interprets that, 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. Jesus, by His life, death, resurrection, ascension, inaugurates the kingdom of God, ushers in the kingdom of God, and He pays for our sin with the blood of the Lamb, and then His salvation comes through Him so that the accuser is thrown down.

This is an amazing truth. In Colossians 2, Paul describes it as our record of debt being erased so that these authorities in the heavenly places, these satanic powers and angelic authorities have no claim over us anymore because our sins have been nailed to the cross and our record of debt has been erased.

It has been canceled. This is why there is now, therefore, no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Jesus said by His death, being lifted up on the cross, John 12, 31, that the ruler of this world will be cast out, and that's precisely what has happened, and Satan has lost his place in heaven.

Do you remember what I talked earlier about how he went to the court of heaven to accuse Job before God's face? He went to the court of heaven to accuse Joshua the high priest before God's face.

[52 : 12] Well, he's not there anymore. He's lost access because he has been cast down from the court of heaven because of his lies and because of his deception, because of his defeat at the hand

of Jesus.

So imagine Satan being like a lawyer that's been disbarred. His legal license has been revoked. And he's been debarred, excluded, expelled permanently from that court. He has no claim over God's people. So who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died more than that was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Instead of having this accuser before God's face day and night, now we have the faithful intercessor Jesus Christ before God day and night. That's our glorious reality. So church, I know there's some of you here who struggle with accusations from the enemy, condemnation of the enemy.

[53 : 28] Don't listen to him. He's been disbarred. He's been discredited. He's a liar.

We, the rest of the woman's offspring, are nothing less than co-heirs with Christ the King because Christ is the first fruits. And we are the rest of God's harvest.

Our victory is assured. Look at verse 12. The devil has come down to you in great wrath because he knows that his time is short. That's the reason why he makes war against us with such desperation.

The devil makes war against us and conquers us physically, not because he's so powerful and we're so weak, not because he's so assured of his own victory, but because he knows he's losing. Because he knows that his time is short. He's like, I think everybody's still aware of this, knows this. You guys know who Mike Tyson is? Yeah, okay.

[54 : 32] So, I mean, it's like the devil is like Mike Tyson trying to bite off Evander Holyfield's ear. After he's been pummeled and realizes there's no way he can win the bout, and instead of being knocked out with, you know, graciously, he decides to bite the guy's ear off.

That's what this devil is like. This is an act of desperation. He knows that his time is short. You may know this already, but because a serpent, a snake is a cold-blooded animal, he doesn't require that much oxygen to function.

So, even after you, like, cut off its head, the head actually can still move and bite. Do you guys know this? And so, you can actually find YouTube videos of a decapitated snake head, and you'll take, like, a snake.

Don't look it up now. I know you've got some of those on your phone. But you can take a stick to the mouth and you don't keep biting. Like, you don't do this. Like, I think there was a man in Texas some years ago who was bitten by a, like, decapitated head of a snake.

And so, that's kind of like what this is like. Jesus has decisively defeated Satan on the cross. He's done. He knows his time is short.

[55 : 46] He's surely going to be vanquished, and the time is going to come, as Romans 16, 20 presses, when the God of peace will crush Satan underneath our feet. We will one day crush that head completely.

But right now, even though it's decapitated, it's still doing this. Because it's desperate. It knows his time is short. And that gives us hope for endurance.

When the enemy, in his fury, comes against us and persecutes us, know that his time is short. Know that his defeat is assured.

That's why he's so desperate. And that's why we, instead of fearing death, we are faithful even unto death. We love our lives not unto death.

We give our lives, we willingly, for Christ. Because that's how he triumphed. That's how he conquered. By dying on the cross in our place, and raised and ascended to heaven. And if we follow him, and follow that power, and are faithful unto death, we too will be raised with him forever.

[56 : 51] Let's pray. Father, thank you for the victory we have in Jesus. Thank you that he has all authority in heaven and on earth.

Thank you that he is our great hero, the chosen one, the king who has vanquished our enemy. The nemesis that was too much for us, you conquered him.

By your blood. And so now, help us, God, to endure and to grab hold of the testimony of Jesus so that we too might triumph by the word of our testimony.

By your name, Lord. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.