**BBC Men’s Revelation Study – Lesson 9**

**The Nativity Story As Told in Revelation – Revelation 12**

**Jesus Defeats the Devil, Guaranteeing His Eradication**

Dear Men of BBC, this week’s study could not be better timed, in light of the tragedy at Covenant School this week. I love Revelation 12, and I think you will too. It gives us a unique telling of the “Christmas Story”—the birth and incarnation of Jesus, and the unfolding of God’s plan through Jesus. It also presents a most helpful understanding of the already-and-not-yet of life between the resurrection and return of Jesus.

“It is John’s Spirit-appointed task to supplement the work of Matthew and Luke so that the nativity cannot be sentimentalized into coziness, nor domesticated into worldliness. This is not the nativity story we grew up with, but it is the nativity story all the same. Jesus’ birth excites more than wonder; it excites evil. Evil knows what this birth means for evil.” Eugene Peterson

**Rev. 11:19-12:6** - Then God’s temple is heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant(**a reminder of the promises and provision God has made for redeeming his people and his creation**).

 And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm. A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of 12 stars on her head. 2 She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. (**cf. Gen. 3:16 – Because of sin, all birthing would be painful for Eve and the daughters of Eve… including birthing of the Messiah!)**

 3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with 7 heads and 10 horns and 7 crowns on his heads. 4 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 (Matt. 2:16-18). 5 She gave birth to a son, a male child, **who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter** (**Psalm 2**). And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne (the ascension). 6 The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.

**I. THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN THE CHRISTMAS STORY in Rev. 12**

**The Beloved People of God - The "sun clothed woman" -** The Covenant people of God, the church of every generation—of whom Mary was both member and representative at the time of Jesus' birth. (Rom.9:5; Gal.4:26, 27; Isa.54:1; 66:8; Hos.2:19-20; Eph.5:32; Matt.1:20-23).

**The Arch Enemy of God - The "enormous red dragon” -** The devil (slanderer); Satan (adversary). His 7 heads represent his authority, the crowns his "royalty" and the 10 horns his very great strength (Eph.2:2; 6:12; 2 Pet.2:4; Jude 6; Luke 4:6; John 14:30; Psa.74:13-14; Ezek.29 and 32). This dragon also represents Egypt, the ancient foe of Israel, whose history provides a background to John's choice of types and symbols. "The dragon positions himself to seize and destroy the woman's child. **Nothing**, indeed, is more urgent for him than to *devour* the Son who is coming into the world to destroy the devil and his works" (Rev.11:18; 1 Jn.3:8; Heb.2:14) (Hughes). The dragon **hates** the Son. Consider Herod's cowardly act of killing so many young children (Matt.2:16ff).

**The Promised Son of God - The "son", the "male child” –** This is the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, who was taken up to heaven after His death and resurrection and who will return to consummate his "rule over the nations"! (Psa.2; Isa. 9::6ff; Phil.2:6-11)

These are the main "players" in the “doxological drama” of Christmas. During the entire conflict God's people are protected from ultimate harm and are nurtured by God while they live in a very evil world (Heb.11:13-16; Phil.4:19). And as Israel’s journey to the Promised Land took 42 years, so the Church will be in pilgrimage “42 months” until we enter the Promised Land of the new heaven and new earth. The main thing John is stressing is that Jesus is Immanuel, the promised Messiah… He is God with us, right here and right now.

**II. THE CENTRAL PLOT OF THE CHRISTMAS STORY**

**Rev.12:7-16** And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. 8 But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. 9 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.

 10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: **Now** have 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. 11 **They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death**. 12 **Therefore rejoice**, you heavens and you who dwell in them!

**The Promise of All Promises:** Genesis 3:15 gives us critical insight into John’s telling of the Christmas Story. “***I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel***.” God declares history will be marked by great conflict and a glorious redemptive victory! God’s Son, Jesus… the Messiah… will prevail!

**The War of All Wars**: In his vision, John is reminded of Satan's rebellion and present defeat. This passage affirms that the greatest war is **behind us… it’s already over**! The “great dragon” was "cast down" and is now en route with his angels (demons) to "eternal fire" (Matt.25:41; Rev.20:10). **The final conflict will simply be the ultimate application of an already-won-victory**. **The** **D-Day of the incarnation of will lead to V-Day of the final consummation!**

C. S Lewis in Mere Christianity – “Enemy occupied territory-that is what the world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed… and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage!”

**The Rejoicing of All Rejoicings**: There's no wonder why John heard jubilation in heaven! Satan is defeated… Jesus has triumphed… and our names are written in the Lamb’s book of life! Christmas should be a time of great jubilation for us as well.

**It is with the birth of Jesus that the kingdom of God has come near!**

**Luke 10:17-20** The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” 18 He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. 20 However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

**It is in response to the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus that we live in the great HOPE of missional living.**

**Romans 16:20** The God of peace will soon crush Satan under **your** feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

**Indeed!!! Born is the King of Israel… the king of you and me… the king of the cosmos! Let us rise and sing his praise!**

**III. ONGOING CHAPTERS IN THE CHRISTMAS STORY**

**Rev. 12:13-17** 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. 14 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 half a time out of the serpent's reach. 15 Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. 16 But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of its mouth. 17 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.

**Thought Defeated, Satan Is Not Immobilized**: Because his defeat is secured, Satan is “going down swinging.” He knows that his time is limited and that he has lost us for eternity, so he will do ***anything*** in his power to make life miserable for us now! He is theaccuser of the no-longer-condemned! (Job.1:9-11; 2:5; Rom.8:1; 1 Jn.2:1-2). Our victory is through the blood of Christ which we confess from our hearts, lips and lives. (Phil.4:13; 2 Cor.12:9f. Rom.8:31-37). Overcomers are those who abandon themselves to the One who is the great Overcomer… JESUS!

**Though Protected, We Are not Glorified**: Let us be wise to the schemes of our defeated foe. (1 Pet.5:8; 2 Cor. 2:11; 2 Cor.11:3). Satan is a defeated but powerful foe. Don't give him more authority than is his and do not give him less respect than he is due. Neither presumption nor paranoia is in order.

**Though Hidden IN Christ (Col. 3:1-4), Let Us Feast All the More ON Christ**: As we love and serve Jesus in our journey home, we are born up and along as on "eagles' wings" (Isa.40:31; Ex.19:4). Until Jesus’ return, Satan will spew a river of evil at us, but God will protect and provide for us. He will ***never*** fail us. He will never leave or forsake us! (Ex.15:12). We are bound for the true promised land of a new heaven and new earth. And as God provided bread and water during the Exodus, so we eat the Bread of Life and drink from the Rock that accompanies us in our journey, and that Rock in Jesus! Avail yourselves of Jesus today! (1 Cor. 10:2)

**Jesus is the true manna and cup we need in the “wilderness” journey to the true promised land. How can we possibly live out our calling as redemptive reconciling saboteurs? We must feast on Christ together!**

Questions for Reflection and Conversation

1. What had the most impact on you this week in your study, and from Scotty’s talk today? What was encouraging, stretching, and/or calling for more clarification?
2. How did this study help you think about the tragedy at Covenant School this week? Perhaps a fresh glimpse of the kind of fury the devil is filled with knowing his time is short? What feelings has this evil event stirred up in you?
3. What are the benefits of knowing what Satan knows—that his time is short? How does this help us think about spiritual warfare, and live with more faith than fear?
4. Seeing how much Satan hates Jesus and how he now primarily directs his rage for Jesus towards the Gospel, Jesus’ bride, and fellow believers... how can we be much more engaged in supporting missionaries, pastors, church plants, and all ministries that seek to exalt Jesus and spread the Gospel?
5. How does this lesson underscore why each of us should be more diligent in our commitment to grow in grace and the knowledge of Jesus? How can we best do that?
6. Let’s close to today praying for Covenant School and Covenant Pres. Church, our city, and the worldwide spread of the Gospel. Also, make known to your brothers any particular prayer requests you have. I love my brothers! Grace and Peace, Scotty