

Revelation Ch12v1-17 - The Dragon Slayer

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[0 : 00] and talk with me. We're going to read Revelation chapter 12 this morning, chapter 12, 1, 17. The title we've given this talk this morning is The Dragon Slayer, so I hope all that becomes clear as we read. Revelation chapter 12, starting at verse 1.

A great 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 its head. Its 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 it might devour her child the moment he 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, to his throne. The woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days. Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon against 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 snake 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 have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before God day and night, has been hurled down. They triumphed over 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. 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.

[3 : 09] 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 wilderness, where she would be taken care of for a time, times, and half a time, out of the snake's reach.

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

Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring, those who keep God's commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus.

Well, let's pray. Father God, we come here today as those who seek to keep God's commands and who seek to hold fast our testimony about Jesus.

and yet we recognise that doing so is going to be hard for we have an enemy.

[4 : 51] We need your help, Father, to know that the victory has been won by the Lord Jesus. help us to stand strong in his strength and in his power so that we too might overcome.

Father, please, may not one of us fall, but may each one of us walk closely with you. may your word do its work in our lives today.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, it's like something out of Lord of the Rings, isn't it?

Or a novel by J.K. Rowling. The three main characters in chapter 12, we've got a woman, a son, and a dragon.

The woman, verse 2, was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. Well, giving birth is always painful, but this is much more than just physical pain.

[6 : 08] Something dark and sinister is prowling around in the shadows. Look at the middle of verse 4. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth so that it might devour her child the moment he was born.

What should be a moment of joy is turning out to be filled with dread. Before this baby is born and has time to draw breath, he's going to be devoured by the dragon.

The woman is in fear. The child is helpless. And when all seems hopelessly lost, look at the end of verse 5.

Her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. We can all breathe a sigh of relief. That was a close one.

Now as we read that, there's something very familiar about the vision, isn't there? In our minds we can't help but think about these three characters, the woman, the son, and this dragon and we begin to interpret, don't we?

[7 : 28] We can't help but think, Johnny, is that Mary? And is this Jesus? And is this Satan? Well, while the characters in John's vision are not real, they do convey a literal truth.

It's not that there is a real woman clothed with the sun and a dragon with seven heads wandering around the place. No, John is using symbolism to communicate a literal truth.

This isn't fantasy. This is real. This vision of a woman, a son, and a dragon retell the true story of the whole Bible.

It's the epic battle between God and Satan. And we know Satan's objective is crystal clear to oppose Christ and destroy the church.

Well, chapter 12 has been written to remind us in no uncertain terms that God has the final victory over Satan and we can have assurance that this victory is ours too.

[8 : 46] God has the final victory over Satan and we can have assurance that this victory is ours too. So we're going to look at three things.

There's three main scenes here as we look at these characters. We're going to see Satan's promised defeat, Jesus' triumphant victory, and the church's guaranteed protection.

So first, scene one, Satan's promised defeat. Now to begin, we need to go back to an earlier true story.

Let's go back to the beginning of the Bible, to Genesis chapter 3. So find your way back. It's the first book in the Bible, Genesis chapter 3.

And here we see God's promise to defeat Satan. God had made a good and beautiful world.

[9 : 49] Adam and Eve were the first man and first woman, God's image bearers who were representing God's rule over the entire earth. But as we go to the Garden of Eden, lurking in the shadows was none other than that snake, Satan.

And with an enticing lie, he proposed to Adam and Eve, you can be like God. You can rule your own life.

And with cunning deceit, he promised, you won't die. The desire for self-rule was too great and Adam and Eve disobeyed their loving creator which unleashed God's judgment on the world, the curse of death.

But that wasn't the end, was it? God made a promise to undo the curse and put things right. And we can read about that promise here.

Genesis chapter 3, verse 14. So after these events, the Lord God said to the snake, because you have done this, because you have deceived the man and woman, cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals.

[11 : 07] You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you, Satan, and the woman, between your offspring and her offspring.

And he will crush your head and you will strike his heel. God promised that a seed from the woman, one of her offspring, a son would come who would crush the head of Satan.

But Satan would strike out. Yes, he will be crushed, but not before he delivers a striking blow. That's the promise at the beginning of this Bible, the true story.

And that promise will be worked out through every page, through God's people, Israel. From the line of Abraham, a child would be born who would come and crush Satan.

Now as we follow the promise, we discover that this promised son would also be God's king. Have a look with me to Psalm 2.

[12:24] Psalm 2. We're making some big jumps as we follow the promise of God through the Bible. Psalm 2.

Psalm 2 is all about the nations plotting the downfall and the destruction of God's promised king. Just as Satan had caused Adam to rebel against God's rule, so the conflict continues.

We can imagine Satan still lurking in the background. Psalm 2, verse 1. Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against who? Against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, let us break their chains and throw off their shackles.

We don't need God. Let us live as we please and be God's ourselves. But look at God's response, verse 4. The one enthroned in heaven laughs.

[13:30] The Lord scoffs at them. He rebukes them in his anger and he terrifies them in his wrath, saying, I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain.

And look what God says the king will do to those who oppose him. Look at the end of verse 9. You will break them with a rod of iron and you will dash them to pieces like pottery.

God's promised son would be a king who would crush his enemies and rule over all things and all peoples.

Is God going to make good on his promise? Well, let's go back to Revelation chapter 12. You see, there is the promised son and there is the great defeat.

The promise is fulfilled. You see, the vision of Revelation 12 is the fulfillment of God's promise. The woman in the vision represents the people of God through whom the promised son would come.

[14:48] The dragon, of course, is none other than Satan. And the son is Jesus himself. Look at verse 5 of Revelation 12.

She will give birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.

That quote comes from Psalm 2, which we just read. Jesus is the promised king, God's son who would come to crush Satan's head.

Jesus came to slay the dragon and the way in which Satan will defeat or the way in which Satan will be defeated is through the work of Jesus.

Look very closely at verse 5. It clearly speaks about the birth of a son. She will give birth to a male child.

[15:49] It also speaks about the ascension of Jesus. Her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. Now, in between these two events, the birth of Jesus and the ascension of Jesus, we have the death and the resurrection of Jesus.

Now, John doesn't mention them here, but he wants us to see in verse 5 that the whole work and ministry of Jesus is in view. In other words, Satan is crushed, the dragon is slayed, the devil is defeated by the work of Jesus.

He's coming into the world as the God-man, the one who lived the perfect life, who never failed under temptation, who never sinned. And when Jesus died, it seemed like Satan had won.

As Jesus was crucified, it looked like it was over, but it was just a strike to the heel. Because as Jesus rose from the dead, he proved his victory over Satan.

He crushed Satan's head. So God promised the defeat of Satan. And God through Jesus has fulfilled that promise.

[17:11] Jesus is now reigning and ruling in heaven over all things and all people, even Satan himself. So Satan's promised defeat.

The second theme is Jesus' triumphant victory. The death and resurrection of Jesus was decisive. It signalled the defeat and the undoing of Satan. And when these events happened, as Jesus died and as he rose, it unleashed at that very moment an almighty conflict in heaven.

Look at verse 7. Then war broke out in heaven. Now, as I read these verses, I often thought, well, this is referring to Satan's initial rebellion against God, kind of somewhere way back at the beginning of the story.

And maybe in some ways we can read it like this, but I think it's saying that when Jesus died and rose, verse 7, then war broke out in heaven.

[18:30] Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and the dragon and his angels fought back, but he wasn't strong enough and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down, that ancient snake called the devil or Satan who leads the whole world astray.

He was hurled to the earth and his angels with him. So it seems that even though Satan is a fallen angel, he still had access to God and he was still roaming around in heaven.

That's what the text is telling us. Look at the end of verse 10 and think of where he is. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters who accuses them before our God day and night has been hurled down.

Satan is there in heaven accusing God's people but now because of Jesus' victory he has been hurled down. He has been thrown out.

Two things will help us to see this. First, Jesus' victory over Satan. As Satan was defeated and removed, look at verse 10, then I heard a voice in heaven say, now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Messiah.

[20 : 16] Victory has now been achieved. Why? For the accuser of our brothers and sisters who accuses them before our God day and night has been hurled down.

I want us to picture for a moment heaven as a courtroom. Imagine the scene. Seated in the dock, the defendants are God's people.

And up stands the chief prosecutor, Satan. He begins to accuse God's people, before God, highlighting their sin, presenting their failures.

Day and night, he never ever stops accusing, piling up all the evidence of disobedience. And then when all seems lost, when judgment is about to be announced, someone comes rushing into the courtroom, then, now have come the salvation and the power of the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Messiah.

Jesus has won. Jesus has been judged for their sin. Jesus has been condemned for their failures. He has died their death and he has defeated sin's penalty by rising from the grave.

[21 : 42] death. And at that very moment, Satan's accusations are torn in shreds.

They no longer stand. They no longer count. He is hurled out of the courtroom forever. The chief prosecutor has been booted out and his powers have been taken from him.

Satan has been kicked out once and for all, never to return and never to accuse again. He has been hurled down.

What a wonderful victory. And the good news is that victory can be ours too. The victory over Satan is our victory.

Look at verse 11 with me. they triumphed over him. Well, who's they? Who's triumphed?

[22 : 51] Well, look back at just at the end of verse 10 where it talks about the accuser of our brothers and sisters. They have triumphed over Satan.

The church, God's people have triumphed. How? By the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.

You see, Jesus won the victory and that victory now becomes ours as we trust in the blood of the Lamb. As we look to Jesus, as we see him die on the cross, it's as if I am saying, Jesus is being judged for me.

Jesus is being condemned for my failure. Jesus is accused in my place. He is treated as guilty for me. You see, as I trust in Jesus, as I claim his death for me, I am free from accusation forever.

The battle has been won. The victory is ours. And this is something that God's people should celebrate, verse 12.

[24 : 07] Therefore, rejoice, you heavens, and you who dwell in them. It's as if we should stop right now and start singing songs of praise and celebration for the victory that's been achieved for you and for me.

But, Jesus has crushed Satan's head. The dragon has been slayed. But, look at the rest of verse 12.

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.

Satan may be defeated, but he is not yet surrendered. he is still opposed to Christ and his church, but he hasn't waved the white flag.

The conflict goes on, but hear this, God's people, the church, are still protected. Which brings us to the third scene, the church's guaranteed protection.

[25 : 24] having been defeated by Jesus, Satan now moves his point of attack. Look at verse 13. 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 represents, as we've been saying, all of God's people, the church. This is clear from verse 17. Look down with me to verse 17.

Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring. And who are her offspring?

Those who keep God's commands and hold fast to their testimony about Jesus. They're God's people, the church, people like you and me.

And Satan is angry. He is mad. He hates Jesus and he hates those who follow him. In fact, look back at the end of verse 12.

[26 : 32] He's filled with fury because he knows that his time is short. He has been defeated. The battle has been won but he hasn't yet surrendered.

And he knows that it's only a matter of time before he is thrown into the lake of fire to be tormented forever and ever. He knows his days are numbered so he is hell bent on destroying the church.

So we need to be aware of Satan's attack. Look at verse 17. It's clear, clear, isn't it?

Satan is waging a war against God's people. He is at war with Carigoline Baptist Church right now. He hates you. But let us not remember, let us not forget that he's been defeated. The dragon has been slayed.

[27 : 41] Satan has been disarmed. He presents himself as threatening and dangerous but he has no weapons. He can snort and he can snarl but the smoke and the fire have been extinguished.

All he can do is lie, deceive and tempt. It may seem harmless, I mean, what's a lie? What's a temptation?

But if we listen to his lies, we begin to doubt our salvation and question our security and we will live a life as if we have been crushed. Look, when I sin, and I'm not the only one in this room who does that, I immediately feel the accusation of Satan.

I become very conscious of his judgment. He might not stand before God any longer but he presents himself to me highlighting my sin and reminds me of my failure.

He presents his case and ashamed to say it, the evidence piles up in front of me. Johnny, you call yourself a Christian?

[29 : 06] You think God loves you? You want to serve in the church? Johnny, you're a fake and you're a fraud. How can God forgive you again?

You think he loves you? He's given up on you and you might as well give up. we can feel quite small before a dragon.

We can get weighed down by guilt and shame. And our response is to sneak off to the sides and hide in the shadows.

Pull back and believe his lies and go, no, I can't serve in the church. I can't do that. Look at my life. And his accusations crushes.

us. We don't open up our Bible because we think, yeah, I am a fraud. But it's all deception. It's all deception.

[30 : 07] Yes, I have sinned. But guess what? It's all forgiven sin. It's all paid for sin.

In that moment and throughout our daily lives, we need to remember that Jesus has defeated Satan. His powers to accuse and condemn are broken.

He has no weapon. He's been disarmed. He may snort and snarl at you, but the fire that he breathes out has been extinguished.

Peter talks about him being like a prowling lion, looking for someone to devour. Well, it's as if the lion, his fangs have been taken out and all he can give you is a wet, slobbery munch.

He cannot do anything to you. You see, when the attack comes, we need to remember our protection. Did you notice that when the attack comes, in Revelation 12, there's always deliverance?

[31 : 22] Look at verse 13. 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 wings of a great eagle so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness where she would be taken care of for a time, times, and half a time, out of the snake's reach, the woman, God's people, the church, will be protected.

Now, to help us grasp this and to get the most out of it, we need to understand the symbolism and the imagery here. First, look with me at the symbolism.

We're told that the church will be taken care of for a time, times, and half a time. Well, what's all that about? Well, a time is considered to be a year, so a time, times, half a time is equal to three and a half years.

It's the same length of time that was mentioned in verse six. Have a look back at verse six and again note the way in which they are delivered.

[32 : 43] the woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God where she might be taken care of for 1260 days.

Now, there are 1260 days in three and a half years, so these two numbers are talking about the same time frame.

And I think here the time frame that it's representing or symbolising is from the resurrection of Jesus to the return of Jesus.

So all people who live in that time, who have trusted in Jesus and who are waiting on his return will be protected by Jesus.

We do not need to fear Satan. We will be protected. Now look at the imagery. In verse 6 and in verse 14 we're told that they were taken into the wilderness for protection.

[33 : 58] Now why would he say they're taken into the wilderness? It doesn't sound a very protective place, does it? A desert. Well, remember the account of the Exodus.

God's people. Remember the account? They were in slavery under the cruel tyrant Pharaoh. And God heard their cry and rescued them.

He delivered them. In fact, God defeated their enemy. He crushed Pharaoh and his enemies. God opened up the Red Sea to let his people cross.

But when Pharaoh came chasing after with his armies, remember the sea came in on top of them and destroyed them. And as they went through the Red Sea, so they entered into the wilderness and they travelled and they made their way to the promised land.

And as they travelled, God protected them and provided for them. He gave them food and water. He was a cloud by day from which they could follow, a fire by night.

[35 : 08] his presence amongst them. In fact, in Exodus, that whole event is summarised like this, as God spoke to his people.

You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now, can you begin to see the imagery?

Look again at verse 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 wilderness.

You see, as God's people, we have been rescued from a cruel tyrant, Satan himself. Our enemy has been crushed and defeated.

the promised land awaits us. The new heavens and the new earth is coming, but right now today, we are walking through the wilderness.

[36 : 18] And as we travel, we are guaranteed God's protection and care. He will walk with us. He will provide for us. The dragon may confront us.

He may frighten us and scare us, but we are safe and secure. Yes, opposition will come.

Yes, persecution will be experienced. Yes, there will be suffering and struggles. Yes, we all will fail and fall. But as we walk through our wilderness years, God has us in his hands.

Our salvation is secure. Our hope remains. The guarantees of the new heaven and new earth are kept for us. He will bring us through.

He will carry you on eagle's wings wings and will carry you to himself. So in our journey, can I encourage us to remind each other as we walk along that we don't walk alone.

[37 : 37] We walk together as an army of God's people singing the song that Satan is defeated, Jesus is victorious, and the church is protected.

Let's pray together.