

The Christmas Story for: Fantasy Lovers (or the dragon that wanted to eat the baby)

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[0 : 00] Father, we ask that your word written would enter deep into our hearts. Father, you know even this morning, Father, you know even this morning the problems we face.

You know, Father, the things that we face that seem insurmountable. Father, you know those of us who are waking up in the middle of the night and it just seems, Father, as if there are snakes and dragons that are just eating us up and don't allow us to sleep.

And Father, you know the dark places in many of our lives. And we thank and praise you, Father, that you know us perfectly and completely, that you know us better than we know ourselves, that, Father, you even know every dream we have at night that we do not remember when we wake up.

And knowing us so perfectly, still you loved us and love us and sent your Son to die upon the cross to be our Savior and our Redeemer.

So, Father, you know us perfectly. We invite you to pour out your Holy Spirit upon us this morning in the point of our deepest need and that you might, we ask that you might bring your word deep into our lives so that we, Father, might be freed up to serve you and bring you glory and to bear fruit for your great glory in our daily lives.

[1 : 25] And this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated. So, I grew up in a very conservative Baptist-type church that regularly had prophecy conferences.

And I don't know if any of you have, maybe there's still probably churches like this, but at least once a year we would have a prophecy conference and the visiting evangelist or whatever, he would stand there and he would talk about how these things going on in the world, you know, if you go to Revelation chapter 18 verse 5, that's what's talked about here.

And go to Ezekiel and you go to Daniel and it would be all these very elaborate things that were going on in the world and these elaborate interpretations that were going on, you know, from the Bible.

And I have to confess, and I don't mean to put anybody down here, but I have to confess that I found it very confusing as a child and as a teenager. Part of the reason I found it so confusing as a child and a teenager was because when I read the verse, it didn't seem to match up with what Russia was doing or something like that.

And one of the consequences of this, but I just sort of listened to it, you know, I'd be a bit spellbound, a bit skeptical, but a bit overwhelmed by it. I was also a bit curious by the fact that books that people all seem to like, that when they didn't happen the way they'd written, that nobody would ever say, I'm really sorry, I guess I misunderstood the Bible.

[2 : 59] And so it's all very confusing. And one of the consequences of this for me was that when I became ordained, I was afraid to preach on the book of Revelation. Because I'd just be honest with you, I'd think, good grief, there's no way I can try to figure out all of this stuff and sort of stand up to the congregation and have my Bible in one hand, so to speak, and have the National Post and the Citizen in the other hand and be able to say, you see this part over here and then you close it and then you say, that's what this piece here is.

And I was just too, I just didn't think I could do it. And then about four or five years ago, I don't want to sound overly mystical, but it was as if God gave me a bit of a smack down and said you have to start facing some of your fears in preaching.

Those of you who go to churches, every one of your clergy have things they're afraid to speak about. And if they tell you they don't, they're probably not telling you the truth. And so one of the things that you can do as a gift to your pastor is that pray that they will have courage to confront their fears in preaching.

And so I realized that it was God sort of saying, George, you have to deal with some of your fears of preaching. So in fact, to be honest, some of the books in the Bible, I knew instantly some of the things that I was afraid to preach on.

I was afraid to preach on Ecclesiastes because it just seemed like on one hand I really liked it, but I'm prone to depression, you know, because it's like everything's bad, everything's going to get worse, and you're going to die.

[4 : 30] Like that's the sort of book. Like John Maxwell doesn't write books on happy thoughts from Ecclesiastes for leaders, although he should.

It would really probably help leaders if they spent more time in Ecclesiastes. And I realized I was afraid to preach on 1 and 2 Timothy because I'd have to talk about the ordination of women, and I was afraid that I would lose people over that.

And one of the other books that I was afraid to preach on was the book of Revelation. And so I've preached through Ecclesiastes, and I've preached through 1 and 2 Timothy, and I've preached through Revelation. And a big surprise to me when I finally started to preach through the book of Revelation is that in the center of the book of Revelation, I found out that there was a Christmas story.

And I discovered this in March, which is when I preached it. But to my great surprise, I discovered that there is a Christmas story. And so in fact, here's the title for the Christmas story.

Andrew, if you could put it up. The Baby That the Dragon Wanted to Eat. I don't know why there's not storybooks about this. You know, just think of all the dialogue.

[5 : 39] You could have the dragon saying, I hate that baby, but my, it looks tasty. And, sorry, I'm not allowed to say that. Did I just say that? I'll be on the tape, right?

You know, there's all these things you could play with, but it's actually, there's a story in the Bible, in the book of Revelation, and you really should call it The Baby That the Dragon Wanted to Eat. And, you know, maybe some of you folks that are gifted in art, like, here's a children's book that nobody's exploited.

And maybe the dance troupe, after hearing this sermon, will say, next year, our Christmas ballet will be about the baby that the dragon wanted to eat. They could have, you know, the larger girls, all linking arms, and the tiniest little girl.

In fact, maybe they could bring in a little two-year-old to cower while they danced over her and imitated trying to eat her. And, I mean, there's all sorts of potential. But there actually is, in the book of Revelation, a Christmas story, and it really is about a dragon that wants to eat a baby.

Now, before I read this, some of you are going to say, whoa, George. Before you even say that, you might say to your wife or your friend, Martha, I knew we shouldn't come to an Anglican church.

[6 : 54] They're just going to ruin the Bible for people. They're completely disrespectful to the Bible. I knew we shouldn't come here. Everybody knows that the book of Revelation is primarily about the way they talk about it at prophecy conferences.

But here's the thing. I'm not going to prove it to you. If you want, you can go through my sermon archives and hear my first sermon on the book of Revelation and some little videos about it. But here's the thing I discovered about the book of Revelation.

If you could put up the next point, Andrew, that would be great. Revelation is a book about Jesus, who he is, what he has done, is doing, and will do.

That's what Revelation 1 tells you, amongst other things, that the book of Revelation is actually a book about Jesus. And it talks about who he is, what he has done, what he is doing today, and what he will do.

So in other words, people who do talk about Jesus coming back, I'm not, I, listen folks, I'll stand before you right now, and I have absolutely no embarrassment or shame about it.

[7 : 56] Jesus really lived, he really existed, he really died on the cross, he really entered into death and tasted everything there is to taste of death with nothing left over, and on the third day he really did rise from the dead, he wasn't resuscitated, he defeated death, he defeated that which causes death, which is sin, he defeated every hostile spiritual power, he defeated hell itself, he stands triumphant on the other side of death, he rose to heaven, and he will come back again, and I have no hesitation about saying that, that's what the Bible teaches.

And we should know the blessed hope that God is sovereign over our world, and that Jesus will return, and he will bring all things to their proper end, and their proper conclusion, and then he will judge the living and the dead, and then there will be a new heaven and a new earth, where those who have put their faith and trust in Jesus will live forever with him.

That is the blessed Christian hope. And so for people who talk about things at the end of the world, I'm not disagreeing with them at all. What I am saying is that the book of Revelation, if you read it, knowing that it's a book about Jesus, about who he is, what he has done, which is why it can have a Christmas story in it, why it can talk about the crucifixion, what he is doing and will do, that's why the book of Revelation, all the way through, at the beginning and the end, it says you've got to keep the words of this book.

You can't keep words that are only talking about the future, but you can keep the words if it's talking about Jesus, helping you to remember and understand what he did in the past, what he's doing around you today and what he's going to do in the future.

So that's what the book of Revelation is all about. So let's just read the story and so if you have your Bibles, it's Revelation chapter 12 verses 1 to 6. If you don't have your Bibles, there's a couple of extra Bibles over there and I think maybe Neil can get you some extra Bibles and you're welcome to follow along.

[10 : 01] Revelation 12, 1 to 6. Here's the Christmas story or the baby that the dragon wanted to eat and it goes like this. I'm going to read it through and then we'll sort of just sort of process it and camp there for a while and try to sort of puzzle over it because it's a bit of a, well, you'll hear.

Revelation 12, 1 to 6. 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 crying. She was crying out in birth 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 heads seven diadems.

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.

She gave birth to a male child, one who was to rule all the nations with a rod of iron. But her child was caught up to God and to his throne.

[11 : 18] 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. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. So some of you are going to say, whoa, okay, George, that's really crazy. That's a crazy story. And, you know, frankly, George, it bothers me that God would speak in these ways.

Like, why can't God just get to the point? Like, why can't he just speak plainly? Like, you know, I can sort of see why George, you were afraid of preaching about this because, you know, frankly, like Luke, you know, the baby in the stable and the shepherds and the three wise men.

Some of those things didn't actually happen in the Bible. But, you know, that's a very comforting type of story. Like, why doesn't, like, why does, like, this just can't even be in the Bible. It's just sort of, it's all crazy imagery, like dragons and just, why on earth, why can't God just speak plainly?

Just like a plain, why can't he be as clear and plain as a bank machine? You know, press this button and this button and just nice and simple and clear. Well, here's the thing.

[12 : 28] Andrew, if you could put up the point. The true and living God truly speaks and he is not stuck on one genre. The true and living God truly speaks and he is not stuck on one genre.

So, you know, here's the thing. If you were to say, you know, why can't God be, like, a bit clearer and like, and simple and stuff like that? Well, that sort of works for you. But, you know, frankly, we got to get over ourselves.

You know, I don't want to depress you, but you're not the center of the universe. And God doesn't have to organize all of his communication, every word he says, just to please you.

Like, why would God have to do that for you? But, you see, here's the thing is that God understands that people hear in different ways. That's why, if you look in the Bible, there's like laws.

Because some people, they start to understand laws. I know a person, this is true, and she was a lawyer. She came to faith by hearing Jim Packer speak a sermon on the book of Leviticus about laws.

[13 : 36] But that shouldn't be a surprise. She's a lawyer. And all of a sudden, she said, all these things in her head clicked, you know? And some of you are more philosophically inclined, and so, you know, you like things like the book of Romans.

And some of you are more mystically inclined, and so you like 1 John. And some of you like talking in riddles, so you like the book of Proverbs, or you like, you know, you like the book of James. And some people like just simple narrative stories, so there's things in the Old Testament, the Gospels, and you really like them.

And that's fine. And some people, you know, walking to London doesn't do anything. They sort of go, snore. Snore. But one foot up, one foot down, that's the way to London town.

They go, whoa, better rhythm. Some imagery. That sounds better than I walked to London. One foot up, one foot down, that's the way to London town.

And for some people, they don't want to come out and say it, but frankly, pastoral scenes from the book of Luke with shepherds and, you know, the baby, and they don't want to tell their friends that they find it a bit boring.

[14 : 43] But then you say, there be dragons. And some people, their ears and eyes light up. There be dragons?

Yes, and angels in battle. And dragons that are real dragons like smog, not like I want to train a dragon cartoons.

Big, scary, hulking dragons that eat people. and all of a sudden, they get interested and they get excited.

And that's the fact the matter is, is that we got to get over ourselves, is that God's really, I believe that the true and living God truly speaks, but he's not stuck on one genre.

And so for those who, there be dragons, wake up. Revelation 12, 1 to 6, is your version of the Christmas story that helps you to see the dark side of the whole story of the book of the birth of Jesus.

[15 : 49] I mean, if you think about it for a second, if you, like lots of people read Matthew 1, but very, very few churches spend very much time on Matthew 2 because it's a little bit awkward preaching about the slaughter of the innocents.

It's like when you preach the Psalms and you stop at the, a little bit towards before the end of Psalm 137 because smashing the heads of babies, it's just a little bit, well, frankly, not very devotional and uplifting and we want to try to lift people up.

But, the slaughter of the innocents after the birth of Jesus, as soon as the powers find that the baby is born, they want to kill the baby and every baby just to make sure they got that baby.

And as soon as Jesus begins his public ministry, the first thing that happens is he's tempted by the devil in the wilderness. And Judas, Satan enters into Judas to betray Jesus so that Jesus will die upon the cross.

And Pilate and the others, they know, God speaks to Pilate in a dream, but Pilate is going to, he's going to allow Jesus to be, die a horrible death and there is in fact evil in the midst of this story of the birth of the baby in Bethlehem and John in his book of Revelation is our God.

[17 : 14] And for some people who think in images, this is the other thing about it, the way for them to understand this baby and maybe to understand the birth of this baby and maybe start to begin to understand their life is to picture some people would have been shorter back then.

And I think the average lifespan for commoners like Mary and Joseph would have been 30. And so picture some young woman about this tall and very slight because people would have been very skinny back then and by our standards, this tall and slight and maybe just 14 and heavy with child.

And there is, even a two-year-old is more nimble and better able to protect themselves than a heavily pregnant woman going into labor.

Two-year-old can scamper under the bed to hide. You're like this with child in labor pains. You're not going to scamper under any bed.

And picture the woman heavy with child going into labor and smog the dragon, if you've seen the hobbit, standing in front towering over the tiny little girl with his mouth open, their mouths open because there's seven heads and they're snapping at each other because every head wants to eat the baby.

[18 : 54] And yet that dragon is defeated by God. For some of us we think in images. Some of us in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him and without him nothing was made that was made. That lights our fire. For others the image, the visible, visceral image is what gets us through life.

And this story is for you and for me. So let's look at this story. The power of the image. Let's look at verse 1 and 2.

And it begins again with the young woman. And it goes like this. 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.

Just pause there for a second. One of the things I discovered when I actually overcame my fear. I trusted God that I could preach through the book of Revelation. Is there is no book in the New Testament that is more saturated with the Old Testament.

[20 : 03] Some of you have read scholars like Elaine Pagels. She's all wrong. She's all wrong. I mean, I think John played with pagan imagery. I mean, he wasn't an idiot and he would have been surrounded by images from Rome and Greek images and fearsome gods and goddesses but to understand him you have to understand that his mind, that God uses a mind that is completely and utterly saturated with the Old, what we call the Old Testament.

And that one of the problems when we read the book of Revelation is that all the way through it he's taking a part of a verse from Isaiah and a part of a verse from this and a part of a verse from that and a part of a verse from here and a part of a verse from that and he takes these little bits and pieces of verses scattered all throughout the Old Testament and it's as if God as the Holy Spirit comes upon him he takes them all and he puts them in his hand and he sort of does like this like a conjurer he throws it up and out of it comes a woman with the crown and dragons and all of that and it's scattered from when we talked about the dragon he's talking about images from a whole pile of different psalms and he's talking about the book of Job and he's talking about Daniel he's talking about Ezekiel and he's taking all of these little bits and pieces of verses and whoa there's a dragon and when you read and hear this there was verse 1 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 the first thing you think of is Genesis 37 and then there's a whole pile of other imagery which has mingled in with this the woman is Israel the woman is the Jewish people that's who the woman is it's not all going to be a one-on-one correspondence and in fact as we're going to see the image of the woman here is going to be one of those images that John like a poet he takes the image and he keeps the image but in every time the image is reintroduced he changes the focus just a little bit he turns it slightly to give something very multifaceted and very powerful but if you read

Genesis 37 and you launch off take a good commentary the woman is Israel how odd of God to choose the Jews you read the Old Testament he didn't choose the greatest people the strongest people the wisest people when he called Abraham he called a man who worshipped the moon he called a man who worshipped the moon and God right from Genesis chapter 3 has promised that through his people a people that he calls out by his great power for his great glory that out of this one people on the whole planet a Messiah will come and so the woman is Israel verse 2 and she was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth now the images of a woman in pain and giving birth longing for the Messiah to come and now the fearsome image of the dragon verse 3 and another sign appeared in heaven behold a great red dragon with 7 heads and 10 horns and on his heads 7 diadems as I said

John has taken bits and pieces of Daniel Ezekiel Job Isaiah and a whole parts of Isaiah and a whole pile of songs taken bits and pieces and fragments of verses and he wants his Christian readers and his Jewish readers who would become Christians to see and have a sense about how he's taken all of these bits and pieces of verses and he's put them together in this powerful story I mean not him by his creativity because it's God the Holy Spirit that's speaking through John and causing this to be written and the hope is that as you start oh gosh that's Genesis 3 and that's that part of Isaiah and that's that part of Daniel 7 and that's that part of Job and then you see the story so that when you go back and read Genesis and Job and Isaiah and the Psalms and Daniel you don't just it's like a powerful conjurer that the images help you to understand Revelation 12 and then Revelation 12 you go back and you help you to understand the Bible in a whole fresh new way all these passages as you read them in your devotions you're coming along and whoa

Revelation 12 that's an image that's connected to that and this isn't just like a tiny little dragon if you have seen the movie the Hobbit movies think of smog that's what John wants you to think of only smog with seven heads towering over this and then in verse 4 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 and if John is going back to Israel talking about the woman here he's going back to Isaiah 14 and other parts in the Old Testament and he's describing the dragon as the devil and he's describing Lucifer's fall from heaven and taking a third of the angels with him because in the book of Revelation generally stars refer to angels so Mary is ancient he is now pointing to something primordial before Genesis 3 the fall of Lucifer and one third of the angels leaving heaven in rebellion against God and becoming what we now know of as demons and the prince of the demons is the dragon standing over

[26 : 06] Israel about to give birth to this baby and it's just before we get anything any further in this here's the thing some of you are saying George that's you can't really believe that the devil is real like you're just talking about psychological processes no no no no and if you could put up the next point even though John is using very very powerful poetic imagery he wants us to understand that the devil is real and he is evil and he affects real things but he is really and truly doomed even though John is using this fanciful imagery if we walk away from this thinking that they're just metaphors and stories of inner struggle against temptation or that it's like in the

Soviet Union when poets talked about and playwrights talked about communism and used a veiled language and that John is talking about imperial power if you walk away from that you haven't heard John believes and knows that the dragon is real the devil is real and he is evil and he affects real things but he is really and truly doomed and the other thing Andrew if you could put up the next point is that the dragon hates all earthly and heavenly life the devil hates all earthly and heavenly life that's what he wants us to understand go back in your devotions and read Ephesians 6 and the fact of the matter is that for many of us who are in the Christian church we're like a drunk falling off a horse first we try to get on the horse and we fall off on one side and then we try to get on the horse and we fall off the other side and the

Christians habitually we either end up acting as if we're rationalists and empiricists as if all there is are things that you can count and touch and think through and manipulate with your power and we completely and utterly act as if God is distant and demons don't exist and there are no angels and prayer doesn't work and then in reaction to that like a drunk falling off a horse all of a sudden Christians start to act like pagans and they see everything is filled with demons there's demons everywhere they can't even take a step on the sidewalk without seeing a demon and everything is caused by a demon and we become just like pagans who think that there's a God or a God in every living type of thing and then in reaction to that like a drunk getting on a horse we fall off the other side and we become like rationalists and empiricists and the Bible believes in reason and believes in evidence and the Bible believes in minds and thinking but the Bible also teaches that there are devils and there are demons and to ignore them is to live an impractical life because if in fact there are demons then to deal with them is practical and to ignore them is foolish and impractical and so the point of the image is to clarify to us that there is evil intelligences which affect things and make a difference and we're not to brood about them and not to live in fear of them because they're doomed but we are to deal with them when we become aware of the fact that they are there just as a bit of an aside during the first thing I do during the song set if you see me praying is I

I pray that God will bind the demons that are present I don't do a worship service without praying that please pray that too you should do it in your small groups you should do it with your youth groups not necessarily out loud but just privately the devil never misses church and he never misses a bible study so deal with it and then use your mind and all to try to understand the word but pray that the demons are bound and cast out and that Jesus be present and that the Holy Spirit fall and that God would be honored and that he will be glorified and that people will be freed and that they will be delivered and that the word will bear fruit in our lives pray like that because God is not dead and he is not distant he hears he listens and he can act and Jesus has defeated the dragon have I gotten a little bit ahead of the story sorry where am I in my notes look back to verse 4 again or 5 sorry now we're up to 5 she gave birth to a male child one who was to rule all the nations with a rod of iron but 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 three and a half years 1260 days now go back to 5 remember I told you that see I have to confess that

I'm a like my personal favorite I mean I can handle philosophical types of things I have to say I like things like John in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God he was with God in the beginning all things were made through him and without him nothing was made that was made I like things like that but I love stories fundamentally that's what I enjoy and I love finding a really good novel that I can just get immersed in and I can be one of those people that stays up an hour or two after their bedtime because they get gripped by a narrative or a story like a story but in Apocalypse in John you have to read it slowly and what happens here with the image if you think about it the image is originally that of the woman of Israel and Israel is going to give birth to the Messiah but a nation can't do that so John takes the image and twists it just slightly I don't know how many of you have seen the movie the series Band of Brothers this isn't a spoiler alert I don't think but in the Band of

[32 : 54] Brothers at the very towards the very very end of the movie the surviving soldiers they're doing an activity because I don't want to spoil the end if you haven't seen it but all of a sudden it's a very moving thing that happens you see the actors you know doing whatever they're doing and all of a sudden it focuses on each actor at a time and it's a surprise the first time then you're prepared for it and the actor's face changes and you see the soldier whose life they told he lives today it's very movie actually the same face and all of a sudden it's a different face and it's the real person and so what John does here in this in this part with the woman is a nation on one hand can't give birth to a child a woman gives birth to a child and so all of a sudden here in verse 5 it's Mary it's Matthew 1 it's Luke 2 Luke 1 and 2 it's Mary faithful Israel has come down to this one young

Jewish girl who does what God has wished that his chosen people would always do that when she is asked to do something that will bring salvation to the human race and bring God great glory she says be it unto me according to your will the cry that God desires his faithful people to call out to him is voiced by a young Jewish girl in the corner of the Roman Empire and from her the long promised Jewish Messiah who is the Savior not only of the Jewish people but of the whole world is born and here in verse 5 God through John puts together the entire story of Jesus in these few words and the point of the story is that here's the here's smog with seven heads and he's bigger than this building if he was here the only way he could enter into this building is by smashing the roof and smashing the walls and there's this slight

Jewish woman here and she's heavy with birth and she's giving birth to this child and the seven heads are over this young woman now lying down and the heads are snapping at each other because each wants to be the one to eat the baby and the baby that's born Psalm 2 it's all of the prophecies of the Messiah the one who will rule the nations and more than rule the nations because he will be the one who saves the people from every nation and every people group and the baby is and all of a sudden it's speeded up that's the way John writes it it's speeded up he's going to be born he's going to live he's going to have his public ministry he's going to perform miracles he's going to teach brilliant things he's going to die upon the cross he's going to taste all there is to taste of death he's going to rise triumphant on the third day he's going to prove that he is alive to his disciples he's going to ascend into heaven it's all in one big thing and Smog the dragon is confounded he doesn't eat the baby the baby is with the father and he will return and with the dragon's inability to defeat a small pregnant woman and a small tiny baby the dragon is doomed the dragon is doomed and then we show up in the story did you know that we show up in the story

John in particular in the book of revelation has us now show up in the story look at verse six and the woman fled into the wilderness where she has a place prepared by God in which she is to be nourished for 1260 days remember I said how John takes this image of the woman and the woman is Israel Genesis 37 and a whole pile of other imagery and then it's not just Israel in general as an abstraction it comes down to one young woman the same woman and now we see God's faithful people but God's faithful people are changed Andrew if you could put up the next point the next woman we followers of Jesus are remnant Israel and grafted in pagans I'm not doing replacement theology here folks but just work with me with my points okay that's who this new woman is God's faithful people and God's faithful people are

Jewish believers in our midst and the rest of us my Jewish brothers and sisters their ancestors were with Moses and with David mine stripped ourselves naked painted ourselves blue and danced like fools before the Romans sorry it's not quite equal but somehow or another God takes us stripped naked painted blue pagan taunting pagans and grafts us into Israel and we are that woman after the death and birth and death and resurrection of Jesus and his ascension who are waiting for his return we are that woman and we go to the wilderness where God has prepared a place for us to be nourished if you could put up the final point Andrew we the followers of Jesus dwell in God's sanctuary in the wilderness to bear witness until he returns we followers of

[39 : 04] Jesus dwell in God's sanctuary in the wilderness to bear witness until he returns you see the word here which is translated as place it's the exact same word that's in John 14 let not your hearts be troubled I go to prepare in my father's house are many mansions I go to prepare a place for you that word place is the same word here it's a word of sanctuary where God is and where you are gods and we today live in a wilderness where we cannot in a sense provide our own resources but in a place where we cannot prepare our own resources we who are followers of Jesus don't live without resources we live in a sanctuary with the living God himself who nourishes us and in this place of sanctuary where we are nourished if you go on and read the rest of revelation 12 the dragon is still trying to devour us but in the face of the dragon who tries to devour us in the wilderness we are in the sanctuary with

God where he nourishes us and we are called in the face of the dragon's roar and with his breath upon us to know that the breath of the Father the Holy Spirit dwells within us and we bear witness to Jesus in a place even like our country which is increasingly given over to a culture of death we are to be a sanctuary of life of deliverance from demons and a sanctuary of life where we are nourished by God just in closing some of you might say George if you knew how dragonish I am all I can do is look at that story and think I'm outside of that story I'm not nourished by God George if you knew the dark dragonish things which I do and I enjoy the taste of the evil some of you are saying

George if you knew the dragons that I have from my past and I'm living with right now if you knew how I cannot even sleep at night because there are these dragons and things that wake me up and tear me up and eat me up and beat me up if you knew those things you would know that I only hear these things and all I think is I just wish I could be like other people and have that place of sanctuary and if you are like that here today that means you understand your need for the gospel you are ready to be taken in the arms of the baby of Bethlehem of the savior who died for you you are ready to be taken by him because you can't defeat those demons I can't defeat the dragons I have no power to defeat my dragons but I have a savior and so do you who will take you in your arms and those dragons look really big within and without and the savior will put you on his shoulders and he's way bigger than that dragon he can defeat it and will not because you're strong or

I'm strong because you just know you need the savior I didn't think I was going to cry you know you need the savior so there's no better time than right now today to say Jesus I need you to hold me in your arms I need you to put me on your shoulders and I need you to defeat these dragons and demons in my life and I need you to never let me go because I'm just worried these dragons will devour me from without or within and Jesus turns no one away there is no dragon within and no dragon without that will make our savior turn his eyes from you he saw every dragon he knows every dragon in your life and everyone is defeated and everyone is doomed and he died because he loves you we can live here knowing that Jesus is greater than every dragon I have ever faced am facing or will face call out to him and we can know that

Jesus is with me as I face my internal and external dragons call out to him and in the face of every dragon we can think on Jesus and keep his commandments and bear witness to him and it might be faltering and it might be hard but there's no dragon afflicted person here that God cannot use in Jesus to bring him glory absolutely no one please stand and I'm not going to lead you in a sinner's prayer because that'll just end up making you think that there's some magic formula that you have to remember if you are here today and you've never given your life to Jesus just say Jesus take me and I want to be yours I want to be Revelation 12 6 I want to be Revelation 12 6

[44 : 47] Jesus just take me I want to be yours and just your own words the cry of your own heart and those of us who are followers of Jesus but we're listening to the dragons and we're letting them eat us up there's no time better than right now just to call out to Jesus and ask him to help you to face the dragons and bear witness to Jesus there's no better time than right now to do it won't be better tomorrow won't be better next week no better time than now just closing bow our heads in prayer dear Lord this is a prayer that's in your bulletin you can take it home and read it yourself but I'm going to pray it out for all of us right now dear Lord I thank you that you know the name and power of every dragon I face within and without I thank you for Jesus I thank you that by his death and resurrection sin and death and every dragon have been defeated I thank you that by faith in

Jesus I can share his victory help me to trustingly and obediently walk with Jesus in the dying days of the doomed dragon and its followers in Jesus name we all pray and say Amen