

The Dragon Behind The Curtain

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[0:00] If you aren't already there in your Bibles, if you go ahead and turn to Revelation chapter 12. Revelation chapter 12. In the iconic 1939 film, The Wizard of Oz, the main character, Dorothy, is told to follow the yellow brick road.

To go to the what city? Emerald City. Someone's seen it. That's good. And there, she meets with the great and powerful Wizard of Oz.

And she asks him for help to get back to Kansas, which is where she's from. He's a very mysterious and intimidating wizard. He's got this green head that floats in midair.

And his voice is loud and intimidating. His very presence calls forth fire and smoke. But after defeating the Wicked Witch of the West at his request, Dorothy and her friends return to the Wizard a second time.

And this time, he is not going to help her still. Dorothy's little dog, Toto, wanders off to the side of the throne room of the Wizard and pulls back a curtain and reveals a little old man who is behind the Wizard.

[1:24] He is the guy pulling all the Wizard of Oz. He's the guy pulling all the levers and pushing the buttons. He's the person who is behind all the intimidation and impressive display.

The real identity of the Wizard is unmasked. The curtain is pulled back and we know where the source of all the intimidation and fire and smoke comes from. We're right in the middle of the book of Revelation.

We're in chapter 12, literally the middle of the book. It's 22 chapters long and we just got done with chapter 11. And in the middle of the book, it's like we've been penetrating all the craziness that's going to happen at the close of the age.

And we are getting greater and greater insight the more we get into the very heart of this book as to what reality is really like.

And that's the strength of the apocalyptic literature that Revelation is written in. All the symbols and the pictures, it kind of gives us a different picture of reality.

[2:40] And the picture we're going to get right here in the very middle of the book. After we've gone through these judgment cycles and we've seen these little interludes happen that tell us about who the church is in the middle of these judgment cycles.

Right now, at the end of the second judgment cycle and there's one more to come. Right now, we get to the very heart of reality. The curtain is pulled back.

And we see what is going on behind the scenes of human history. So, what we're going to do this morning is we're going to look at this vision in chapter 12 that Nancy read for us just a moment ago. And we're going to see it unfold in three scenes. We're going to spend most of our time just trying to get a handle of what's going on in these three scenes. And I'll walk us through each one.

At the end, I'm just going to try to, we're going to kind of wait for the main point of this vision until the very end. And then when I state it, it'll be like, oh, yeah, of course, I see it now. And after we kind of get that main point, like figured out, okay, this is what it's all about, I'm going to give us three reflections to kind of bring it home so we can walk it out in faith and obedience.

[3:57] You guys good with that? Okay, good. Let's jump in. Let's look at the first scene. I'm going to call the first scene, The Conflict and the Triumph Part 1.

The Conflict and the Triumph Part 1. So right at the beginning of this vision, verse 1 of chapter 12, two signs appear. The first is a woman. And what a woman she is.

She's clothed with the sun. Her feet are on the moon. And she's got a 12-star crown on her head. Now, by now, we're veterans in Revelation. And we know like, okay, she's not literally clothed with the sun.

She's not literally standing on the moon. She doesn't literally have 12 stars on her head. But these are symbols. They're pointing at something. And even the word of sign shows us that she's a sign. She's pointing to a reality that's not herself.

Okay? So this is meant to get our eyes on a reality. So this is some woman. And on top of this, she's pregnant. And not just pregnant, but she is in labor. She is in the turmoil of labor.

[4:59] She's crying out with birth pains, verse 2. Agony of giving birth. But who is this woman? I'm guessing you're already thinking, okay, it could be this person.

It could be this person. Well, let's ask another question before we try to pinpoint somebody. Are there other women that show up in the book of Revelation? And if so, how do they show up?

That might give us a little clue to interpret who this woman is. And yes, the answer to the question is yes. Other women do show up in this book. In chapter 17, we see one.

And in chapter 19, we see one. In chapter 17, we meet the great prostitute. She's called Babylon the Great. And in chapter 19, we are introduced to a very different woman, the bride.

The bride of the Lamb. These women represent big groups of people. One is corrupted and opposed to God and to his people.

[6:00] And the other is God's faithful saints. His pure, holy people who belong to him by faith. Okay? So, all right. If God's using, or if God, John, through John, is using these women as symbols of different groups of people, then we got a little further down the path of understanding who this is.

But the whole sun, moon, and 12 stars thing, that kind of makes us, well, what's that all about? Well, the whole pregnancy thing, well, what's that all about? Back in Genesis 37, Joseph, one of the patriarchs of Israel, he had a dream that the sun, the moon, and 11 stars were bowing down to his star.

It was a picture of his family, the covenant family of Israel, Jacob, Jacob's wife, the 12 sons of Jacob. And that was the origin of the people of God in the Old Testament, the people of Israel. And, so not just all that Old Testament kind of people imagery, but she's also pregnant. And in verse 5, we see that she gives birth to a very special child, who sounds very much like what Brian read about earlier at the start of our service in Psalm 2, Jesus, the Messiah, the one who was born to rule with an iron rod.

Okay, so who is this woman? Well, I think all these clues are pointing to this. I think it makes most sense that this woman represents the faithful, covenant people of God throughout all of history.

[7:32] Both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. But in this first scene, her Old Testament roots are showing pretty clearly. The whole sun, moon, and stars thing, as well as she's getting ready to give birth to the Messiah.

My wife is eight months pregnant. And this past week, she shared with me, I'm starting to feel it. I'm starting to feel the reality of the late stages of pregnancy.

The longing for it to be over, to have the baby. The discomfort that accompanies that last stage of pregnancy. And the expectation of, man, I just can't wait to see this kid.

In a similar way, the Old Testament people of God were also kind of in the agonies of labor. They were longing to see the birth of the Messiah, the deliverer of Israel.

And one day, after a long and difficult pregnancy with great labor pains, the faithful Old Testament people of God delivered their deliverer in the birth of the Messiah.

[8:40] Mary was one of that faithful covenant people. The faithful covenant people of God were the kind of surrounding context into which the Messiah was birthed. So in that sense, we have this woman representing the people of God throughout the ages, but particularly here in this first scene, the Old Testament people of God.

And she's gasping for breath. And she's pushing through waves of labor. And God's faithful community is ready to deliver the Messiah. That's the picture. But, enter the second sign. Look at verse 3. Woman in labor, dragon. You got to love apocalyptic literature, right? I mean, it's so graphic. It just kind of startles you. It shocks you. It's this utterly weak, vulnerable woman screaming with labor pains.

And then there's this dragon. Not just a wolf or a snake or a lion. A dragon. I mean, you can't picture anything more sinister, cruel, powerful. And what's up with these seven heads and these ten horns and these seven crowns?

[9:49] Well, the numbers, the seven and the ten, they symbolize completeness. And the heads and crowns and horns, they all symbolize strength, authority, power. So this dragon is not just a dragon, which would be scary enough.

But he's a dragon with complete power and authority. Now, it's given to him. It's not inherent in himself. But he's a dragon, nonetheless, with complete power and authority. I'm guessing you probably have figured out who this dragon is by now.

He's the real enemy behind the curtain. The ultimate arch nemesis of God and God's people. The bad guy of all bad guys.

Remember, the book of Revelation is written to a group of churches in Asia around A.D. 90. About 50 years after Jesus rose from the dead. And they're experiencing persecution and hostility and opposition from all sorts of different groups of people.

And John is wanting to get their eyes on saying, Okay, yeah, you are facing that. But the real enemy behind all that is the dragon.

[10:57] And in case you're in any doubt who this dragon is, he's named in verse 9. The ancient serpent. The devil. Satan.

But what's this dragon doing? Look at verse 4. It's grotesque. The dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth so that when she bore her child, he might devour it.

I mean, as soon as it gets in our imagination, we're like, Ugh. Ugh. This poor woman about to deliver a baby and he's just there, ready to eat it up.

It's grotesque. Instead of a doctor standing there, we've got a dragon. And that's just what happened, right? Remember the Christmas story? Beyond the warmth and the sentimentality of birth of Jesus, dozens of baby boys are slaughtered in Bethlehem by King Herod because he's trying to take Jesus out.

As soon as he is born, he's born into the dragon's opposition and hostility. Satan's trying to snatch him up. He opposes and tempts Jesus in the wilderness when he grows up.

[12:09] He fills Judas with the desire to betray Jesus. This dragon is opposed to God. He is opposed to God's people and he is especially opposed to God's purposes to deliver his people through his Messiah, Jesus.

Okay, well, what happens? Well, this male child is born. Verse 5, she gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron.

It's the one that Brian read about at the beginning of the service. He's the great king who would deliver and shepherd God's people forever. He's born. But interestingly, we don't get any description of his life or his ministry or his death or his resurrection, anything.

We just get this little phrase, he was caught up to God on his throne. So his birth, his life, his ministry, his death, resurrection is all squashed into he's caught up to God on the throne.

Bam. Now, in one sense, Satan devoured the child in that Satan was instrumental in getting Jesus crucified.

[13:16] But he did not devour the Messiah. He did not eliminate the Messiah. Jesus, up, thrown on it. He is above the dragon now.

So the idea here is that this child, Jesus, the Messiah, was born to rule. Isn't that what Gabriel told Mary back in Luke chapter 1?

The Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end. He was born to be king, to rule, to share the throne of his father.

So do you see the conflict, and do you see the triumph? Eh, not really, right? It's kind of a weird battle.

Weak, pregnant, vulnerable woman in labor, nasty dragon. Child. Not much of a conflict and a triumph. Billy, why'd you name the scene the conflict and the triumph?

[14:19] Not much of an epic battle. Well, there's a connection we need to make before we move on. Let's think about the main characters of the story so far.

Woman. Woman's reptilian enemy. Woman's child. Maybe the word offspring will help. Woman. Woman's reptilian enemy.

Offspring. Woman. What John is trying to get our attention on is the conflict that has been going since the beginning of time.

Keep your place in Revelation 12, but go back to Genesis 3, the very beginning of your Bible. Flip back in your Bibles to Genesis 3. It's all the way in the beginning. It's pretty easy to find.

We need to make this connection if we're going to understand what just happened in this scene. There was a day, a very dark and sad day, that got lit up by a promise of hope.

[15:27] Adam and Eve are human parents whose sin we share have just rebelled against God and His goodness. And Satan was the one who was embodied as a serpent and he tempted them, enticed the woman in particular into the rebellion with crafty words.

And God, in verse 15, 14 and 15, is speaking words to the serpent, words of curse to the serpent, but they were words of promise and life to Adam and Eve and to us.

Listen to Genesis 3, 15. I will put enmity, this is God speaking to the serpent, I will put enmity between you and the woman in between your offspring and her offspring, and he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.

Did you notice that word enmity? It means conflict, hostility, opposition, fighting. God, at this very dark day, the rebellion of Adam and Eve, God would begin a work of resistance against Satan. He might have won the day and the garden, but God is saying, you're not going to win the war. There's this work of resistance that God is going to bring about through Eve's offspring.

[16:50] There would be conflict and opposition, and the offspring of Satan and the offspring of the woman would be going at it. And not an endless conflict, did you notice?

A conflict that would end in costly yet decisive victory. The serpent would bruise the heel of the woman's offspring. It would cost the woman's offspring, but the woman's offspring would crush the serpent's head.

And throughout the entire story of the Old Testament, God's people longed for that offspring to come, who would bring a decisive end to the work of Satan. Their hopes would rise at the birth of a Noah or an Abraham or a Moses or a Samson or a Samuel or a David.

But these heroes of the faith, however good they were, at some point they would succumb to the influence of the serpent and prove themselves not to be the offspring, the one who would crush the serpent's head.

And the conflict continued for ages, the woman opposing the serpent, the serpent opposing the woman, until the long-awaited offspring, singular, was finally born, snatched up to God's throne, and established as king, and the age-long conflict was won.

[18:08] The offspring of the woman triumphed. So that's the conflict and the triumph from an earthly perspective. Part one. Now let's move to the second scene, the conflict and the triumph from a heavenly perspective.

Part two. All of a sudden, in verse seven, we get a shift of scene. War arose in heaven. Suddenly, we're no longer on earth.

We are no longer looking at the events of human history. However symbolic they were, they were earthbound events of human history. The offspring of the woman being born.

Satan opposing the offspring of the woman. Jesus living, dying, rising again, ascending to his father's throne. All events within human history in time and space. And now, we're going to see how the spiritual realm was affected by that human history earthbound event.

In the Bible, heaven and earth are not mutually exclusive spheres. From a biblical perspective, they are interrelated. What happens on earth affects heaven. What happens in heaven affects earth.

[19:25] And John is not just shifting the scenery just for fun. This is not random. No, he is giving us a heavenly perspective on the conflict that was waged and won in the first scene with the birth of the male child.

So, verses seven and eight, we see how the earthly events of Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, monumentally affected the heavenly sphere. Michael, the archangel, and his angels, they make war with the dragon and his angels, but Satan is defeated and there's no place for him in heaven.

And then, comes this decisive statement of triumph for heaven in verse nine. Notice the repetition of what happens to the dragon in verse nine.

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 the angels were thrown down with him.

Thrown down. That language shows up again in verse 10, in verse 12, verse 13, again and again, six times in this chapter. Satan is thrown down. He's out.

[20:38] But maybe that makes you ask the question, wait a minute, I thought that happened earlier. Didn't Satan get kicked out like at the beginning in the garden? Well, if we read our Old Testament closely, we can see that before the Messiah came, Satan was permitted to be in God's presence.

He used this privilege unjustly to accuse God's people. Remember the story of Job? The whole thing started with poor Job when Satan is in the heavenly council of the angels before God and he begins accusing Job.

He's like, Job's only faithful because you're blessing him. So, stop blessing him and he won't do it. He won't be faithful to you. But now, he's thrown down.

Well, what was it that threw him down? Did Michael have some ingenious angelic warfare tactics that kind of confounded the old dragon? Nope. Look at verse 10.

Now, now, now, now, the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come. Now, what is this now all about?

[21:52] What has just happened in the heavenly sphere? Or, sorry, the earthly sphere. The male child who was born to rule the nations with a rod of iron was born and ascended to his father's throne.

The resurrected Lord Jesus is on his throne now and therefore say it is booted out. In John 12, just days before Jesus' crucifixion, he said these words, now is the judgment of this world.

Now will the ruler of this world be cast out and I, when I am lifted up from the earth referring to his crucifixion, will draw all people to myself. Jesus knew that his sacrificial death and his triumphant resurrection would not only be the turning point of human history but also of heavenly history.

From that point on, Satan would be thrown down and cast out and his doom would be sealed. But, why is that important? What significance does that have?

Look at verse 10. Here, God's saints are making this announcement who are, they're already in heaven and they're excited that Satan is thrown down. This is why.

[23:00] Did you notice that? The accuser of our brothers has been thrown down who accuses them day and night before our God. So, because God the Son became a human, lived righteously for 30 plus years, died a sacrificial death for sinners, rose again triumphantly from death and sits now on his father's throne, there is now no prosecuting attorney gunning for a guilty verdict for God's people in God's courtroom anymore.

He's out. He's banished. He's gone. And notice another thing in verse 11. They have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.

We know that Jesus won the conflict. He's the conqueror, the one who triumphs over the dragon. But in verse 11, it says that we also conquer.

It says that God's people conquered the accuser of the brothers. We, as Jesus' people, share in his triumphant victory over the dragon.

Because he conquered, we also conquer. Paul later states this crazy thing in Romans 16, 20. Well, he's speaking to Christians and he says, the God of peace will soon crush Satan underneath your

feet, the church's feet, your feet, my feet.

[24:32] We get to share in the defeat of Satan and the victory of Jesus. We, the offspring of Eve, the singular, the promised male child to rule with a rod of iron, he crushes the serpent's head through his triumphant death and resurrection.

But the remaining offspring, plural, of the people of faith, we share in his serpent crushing. But how?

By the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. We conquer because he conquered on the cross on our behalf. We conquer by the blood of the Lamb. We celebrate it this morning right here at this table.

But we also conquer as we, in our daily lives, we live out that truth in faith and obedience. It's the word of our testimony. Not perfectly, but really, truly.

We start to grasp that that's true and we start to live out of it. And every little bit of that spirit-inspired, spirit-given faith and obedience is tramping on the serpent's head.

[25:47] In short, we get to share the triumph of the Lamb by resting in and faithfully living out what he has already done on our behalf.

So, the birth, the life, the death, resurrection, ascension of the woman's offspring, Jesus, in the first scene on earth, it brings about a simultaneous and decisive defeat of the dragon in the heavenly sphere.

And if we look at the last verse of this scene, verse 12, the heavenly places are rejoicing because the dragon's gone. You can't bring accusation against God's people anymore. But with an ominous note, we also see that the conflict, although it's decisively won, it's not over.

Woe to the earth, verse 12 says, because the dragon has been thrown down there and he is not happy. Which brings us to the third and final scene of this vision we'll call this scene God's care and the dragon's rage.

God's care and the dragon's rage. Oscar Coleman, a theologian of the last century, once used this analogy to illustrate the truth that we find in verses 12 and 13.

[27:04] When the Allies invaded Europe on D-Day, June 6, 1944, everybody, except for a deluded Hitler, knew that the war was over.

The Allies had established a beachhead in France and there's mounting pressure on the eastern front in Russia. The German forces were just stretched too thin.

They couldn't win the war. It was over. But, Hitler, though defeated, was not going to go quietly. He raged. Thousands upon thousands more would die over the next year before the Allies finally reached Berlin and Germany capitulated.

D-Day ensured Hitler's imminent defeat, but V-E Day, Victory in Europe Day, was still a ways away. And the conflict in between them would be fiercer and bloodier than previously because of Hitler's blind rage.

When Jesus accomplished our D-Day on the cross, in the resurrection, in his ascension to his father's throne, Satan was done.

[28:20] War's over. No way Satan can win. And he knows it. And he hates it. He plans to go down raging, fighting tooth and nail, causing as much havoc as he possibly can because he knows his time is short.

You see that in verse 12? In great wrath he's coming because he knows his time is short. So what does he do? Look at verse 13. He pursues the woman.

He can't defeat God. He can't defeat God's Messiah. So who does he go after? The ones whom God loves the most. The ones for whom the Messiah shed his own blood.

But, look what happens in verse 14. Satan's going after the woman, the church. But, the same thing happens in verse 14 that verse 6 foreshadows that we kind of skipped over a little bit before.

The woman, which is God's people, flees to the wilderness where she is to be nourished for a specific amount of time. In verse 6, it's 1,260 days. In verse 14, it's time, times, and half a time.

[29:31] But as we saw a few weeks ago in chapter 11, whether it's 42 months, it's used in chapter 11, or 1,260 days, or time, times, and half a time, those are all different ways of referring to the same amount of time, the same period of time, three and a half years, which is half of seven.

And what does seven symbolize in the book of Revelation? Completeness, fullness. So, in other words, it's not a fullness of a time period. It's cut short. In chapter 11, the church is a faithful witness to Jesus in the world that's the picture.

She's going to be faithfully witnessing to Jesus and suffering for Jesus for a limited amount of time. Not the full seven, three and a half. It's cut short for mercy. And then she'll be called home.

The church is going to be in the wilderness, what it describes here in the wilderness, for a relatively short amount of time. In other words, God's not just going to forget us here. Our suffering for bearing witness to Jesus will be relatively and mercifully short.

But, what's with this wilderness thing? Why are we talking about wilderness? Well, notice the passive voice of the verbs in verse 14.

[30:51] She was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might be nourished in the wilderness. So, what should be popping in your mind is, okay, who gave her the wings and who's going to be nourishing her?

Verse 6 makes it really clear. She flees to a place where it is prepared for her by God. The dragon, her powerful enemy, might be raging, but she has a place of security and nourishment, the wilderness.

And God is there, eager to be with her and to care for her. So, that language of eagle's wings in wilderness was designed to prick John's listeners' ears with the memory of the Exodus back in the Old Testament.

God's people were freshly delivered from a dragon-ish enemy, the Pharaoh, who pursued them into the wilderness. God brought his people into a place of safety and focused fellowship with himself as if snatched up by a great eagle and flown out of the reach of harm.

But, that wily dragon, he won't give up very easily, will he? Look at verse 15. The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman to sweep her away after a flood.

[32:12] He opens his mouth and a flood comes after her. The focus here is not so much on what the water symbolizes as it is that the dragon opens his mouth.

What verbs have we already seen in this chapter that are associated with the dragon opening his mouth? Look back up at verse 9 and 10. The deceiver of the whole world verse 9 and verse 10 the accuser of our brothers.

What comes out of Satan's mouth? Deception and accusation and slander. Lies. He is a master deceiver. He is a relentless accuser and all that junk comes out of his mouth and that's what he's throwing out of his mouth at the church to sweep her away like a flood.

And yet look at verse 16. The earth comes to the help of the woman. The earth swallows the flood of lies and slander. God yet again comes to the rescue this time telling the earth itself to swallow the dragon's flood.

God's care for his people in the wilderness in the middle of being raged at by Satan. Verse 17 shows us again the dragon's rage is dreadful.

[33:30] He's being frustrated by God at every turn and he keeps on making war with the rest of the woman's offspring. All those who have trusted in the Messiah all of those who are part of a faithful community in Christ.

These are the folks who keep God's commandments as we see in verse 17 and they hold to the testimony of who Jesus is and what he has done for them. And this verse ends with the dragon standing on the sand of the sea.

It's rather ominous. And it's a signal that the dragon's not done. In fact, we learn in chapter 13 how exactly the dragon is going to try to make war on the offspring of the woman.

He's going to use the unholy anti-trinity. He, the dragon, the beast that comes out of the sea and the beast from the land who is the false prophet. See that all in coming weeks in chapter 13.

It's going to unpack what that flood of lies and slander is going to look like and how it will really, truly affect the church but not ultimately.

[34:39] So as this third scene closes, it's clear that the dragon rages against the church but God's care will sustain her during her short time in the wilderness of the world before she is called home.

So what's this whole thing about? We've looked at the three scenes, what's this all about? Let's just summarize it this way.

I think as we pull back the curtain on the whole story of redemption that chapter 12 is doing for us, we see this. Through the triumph of the promised offspring, God shelters and gives victory to his faithful people over their raging enemy.

through the promise of the, through the triumph of the promised offspring, the Messiah, Jesus, God shelters and gives victory to his faithful people over their raging enemy.

Folks, D-Day has come 2,000 years ago. The war is over. It's won.

[35:49] Through great cost, the God, the Son, entered human history. He crushed the head of the serpent and he sits triumphantly on his father's throne. And yet, our time on the battlefield is not done.

Our enemy's wrath still has to be endured until the day that his doom comes. And we shouldn't be surprised by that. Bullets are whizzing by our heads, bombs are exploding, and the carnage of deception and accusation and opposition will only get worse.

But, our God has not just won. He is with us. He's on the battlefield. He is sheltering and nourishing and giving us victory as we fight our adversary by trusting in the blood of the Lamb and living out the word of our testimony.

So, let's make three brief reflections on this emboldening vision that we see here and to seek to respond well with faith and obedience. First is this.

This vision gives us, God's people, a cosmic perspective on our current struggle. It gives us a cosmic perspective on our current struggle.

[37:08] I'm guessing that many of you are feeling the difficulty of living in between D-Day and V-E-Day, between Christ's triumph on the cross and His final return.

Perhaps it's just simply living in a universe that is suffering from the corruption and decay that started on that first day in the garden. The day that the serpent deceived our ancestors into rebelling against our good creator and our king.

Perhaps you're suffering from physical hardship, illness, chronic pain, a dysfunctional body.

Perhaps you're struggling with the clear and tragic effects of sin maybe in your life or in the lives of those you care about.

You are grieved with your own sin and guilt or with relationships marred by selfishness or bitterness. You bear the scars of being sinned against by others or you feel the shame of having inflicted those scars on others.

Perhaps you feel helpless and sad as you watch others succumb to the deception of the dragon.

But behind this curtain that we get a little peek into in this chapter we see a panoramic cosmic view of history.

[38:34] It's a cosmic war that began when the universe was fresh and good and young and has led to incalculable suffering and loss and evil. There is an evil force, an adversary who seeks to set himself up as God's rival and to ruin and corrupt what God has made to be good.

It kind of helps us, doesn't it? It helps us see things from a good perspective. That cosmic perspective puts our current struggles in a helpful light. Every couple of years I find myself rereading J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings trilogy.

My wife always kind of laughs at me like, are you reading that again? I love entering into that world because every time I pick it up and I read about little, helpless, comfort-loving hobbits.

I feel like one most of the time. Emphasis on little and small and comfort-loving. They're entering this massive conflict that feels way too big for them.

And I'm reminded that my little life is a part of something really big and far greater than me. and yet there is something far greater than the far greater something good that is for me as I'm walking through the journey.

[40:04] When we step back and we see this ancient conflict from the perspective of Revelation 12 it reminds us that our current struggles are par for the course. Jesus promised us no less.

It's part of the package and if we are trusting in ourselves it's not going to be pretty. But if we commend our bodies and our souls to the one who has and finally will triumph over the enemy we have hope in the middle of the current struggle and 1260 days time times and half a time it's cut short it's not forever we're not home yet.

Second thing our adversary is both decisively defeated and still very dangerous our adversary is both decisively defeated and still very dangerous D-Day has come and we're somewhere in the middle of France pressing forward by faith in the Lamb and by the word of our testimony bullets are flying the enemies counterattacking it's dangerous our current struggle as Ephesians 6 puts it is not against flesh and blood it is against the fiendish schemes of our ultimate adversary who is behind the curtain of all this he's been up to this since the beginning and he's still up to it and he's dangerous yet don't forget he has been thrown down his accusing voice is no longer heard before your God who is also your savior and your father so if you are hearing the accusing voice of Satan reminding you of past regrets or of current failures or fears of the future call this to mind your accuser has been thrown down decisively defeated the prosecuting attorney has been disbarred and thrown out of

God's courtroom you have forever and finally been pronounced not only not guilty but righteous God's son God's daughter because of the blood of the lamb shed for you or maybe the voice of Satan is not accusing you he is seeking to deceive you he is enticing you and you know it you've been listening to his lies you've been attracted by his empty promises that true happiness is not found in listening to the good words of God but it's on that attractive highway over there your enemy is still after you but the lamb has triumphed remember what Jesus has accomplished for you how faithful and true he is for you and how sweet and good his words of life are to you so cling to him listen to him do not follow the voice of the dragon listen to the voice of your savior lastly thirdly God's presence and God's word are sufficient for our spiritual well-being in the wilderness of the world God's presence and God's word are sufficient for our spiritual well-being in the wilderness of the world all that wilderness language in the third scene do you remember that remember verse six God is a place prepared for the woman to flee to and be nourished for the time she continues in the world while the dragon pursues her what did Israel have when they were in the wilderness they were delivered from their pursuing dragon what did they have they had God's abiding presence the pillar of fiery cloud went with them guided them protected them and later on that presence dwelled in the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle so God's presence upheld and sustained and protected and comforted his people on the dangerous and dusty road to the promised land and his presence also nourished them every day bread from heaven he fed them with bread from heaven and water from rocks he nourished and cared for them like a mother in the midst of the dangerous wilderness but not only did they have his presence but they had his speaking presence his word to them he spoke to them there he gave them his good words in the law he instructed them and promised them and led them by his word it is the same what he promises for us his presence is with us not in a tent but his very spirit abiding within our tent wherever we go he's with us he nourishes our spirits with his true and abiding words which we amazingly have in our own language right here to treasure and to cherish and to savor and to consume nourishes us so yes we are in a battlefield but we're not just in the battlefield like David said in

[45:27] Psalm 23 you prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies you anoint my head with oil my cup overflows our God in the middle of the battlefield pitches a tent right where we're at and he sets his table with his banquet feast of his presence and his words his very person relating to and abiding with us in the middle of the battle isn't that what we just did a few minutes ago we nourished ourselves with his grace at the table and he meets us right in the middle of our real life struggles we're going to walk out this door in just a little bit we walk back into the wars and remember that his presence and his words are totally sufficient to sustain you and to uphold you and to shelter you in the middle of the battle in the wilderness if you're feeling this and particularly you're feeling in the battle go to Ephesians 6 this afternoon start in verse 10 and just start meditating on the spiritual conflict you're in and the armor that God not only gives to you but is for you as you fight the warfare of faith this week and remember

Revelation 12 isn't just about you you're in there but it's not just about you it's about us the church we are in this together sharing in the victory that Christ has won for us in the wilderness you are not alone and I encourage you if you are struggling in the battle and you are aware of your enemy this morning go to somebody service is over and ask for help ask for prayer share we need each other

the curtain is pulled back conflict is revealed the victory is ours in the Lord Jesus even if the battle isn't over yet let's share in his victory by faith together church let's pray oh God thank you that you are sufficient for us thank you that our accuser is silenced thank you that he is thrown down through the victory of the lamb help us to live in that victory this week guard us from his wily ways thank you that we can endure his rage because you are with us in Jesus name amen the we happy