

The Nativity (un)Scene

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 December 2022

[0 : 0 0] All right, please take your Bible and join me once again in Revelation chapter number 12 as we look at the Nativity Unseen. So John was given a vision of Christmas past.

That was one of the themes or plots in the play that was put on here last Sunday night. They did such a great job and I really enjoyed that. And many of you, maybe your favorite Christmas movie is The Christmas Carol, but it's about going back and looking at something.

That's what John is given the opportunity to do on the Isle of Patmos is he's able to see something as a wonder or as a sign. It's symbolic of something else. Driving back from Kentucky this week where it was negative 5 degrees and I used to say it's all the same after under 30.

That's not true. Negative 5 is different than 5. And as we were driving together, I'd ask Stephanie, I said, have you ever seen Elizabethtown, Kentucky? And she's like, because I did.

I said, well, no, that's the sign, right? We didn't go to Elizabethtown, but we saw the sign of it. The sign for Elizabethtown was not Elizabethtown. It was a sign. And so that's what's happening here.

[1 : 0 3] He is giving a sign of something, identifying something else. It's a symbol. It's a way to point to reality. And so what is it that he is shown?

He's shown a woman, a child, and a dragon. We're going to look at each three of those today. Verse number 1. And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of 12 stars.

And she being with child cried, prevailing in birth, in pain to be delivered. And she being with child. Several women were mentioned throughout Revelation. There's Jezebel.

She represents pagan immorality. There's a woman in chapter 17. She represents an apostate, non-gospel teaching church. And then there's a woman who represents the bride of Christ in chapter number 19.

But here in chapter 12, there's a woman. So a Catholic view would be that of Mary. And that would be understandable that she was with child. And so that would make sense. And as she represents Israel, as being part of Israel, then that would be with the Bible.

[2 : 1 0] Another one would see them as the church. And that's exciting, but it's misleading. Here we have this woman being the nation of Israel that the Messiah will come from.

We find many times throughout the Scripture where the nation of Israel is in travail, where they're expecting the Messiah to come from them. Isaiah, Hosea, and Micah, and Matthew.

And in Genesis chapter number 37, remember what Joseph saw that made his brothers so mad? There's a description there. Very similar to what is being explained right here.

So it goes all the way back to the very beginning in the garden where a promise is made that I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed, and it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Later on in the Bible, Genesis chapter number 12, after men began to scatter after the Tower of Babel, God comes to Abraham and he says, it's from you that all the nations of the earth are going to be blessed.

[3 : 16] So we go from Genesis 3, now to Genesis 12, and we find that it's in this family, this nation, that the Messiah is coming, is going to come. There's so many fascinating things here.

I very quickly get over my head in the book of Revelation. If you'd like a further study in Revelation, let me recommend two life groups to you, okay? Dave, I believe Brother Frick, they have been in Revelation. I don't know if they're still there, but you could go over there.

And David will be in Revelation until it's real time, all right? Until we are caught up with it. And so there's two groups that go farther. Because like verse number 6, which I left off, talks about a three and a half year period.

But I just want to help us see these three pictures. What I really want you to see is the work of the child to overcome the dragon. And so if the dragon could destroy Israel, if the dragon, as you'll know here in a moment, if you don't already, that that is Satan, that is the devil, that's the accuser of the brethren, that is the evil one.

If he could overcome and destroy Israel, then he could wipe out God's entire plan. He could make God a liar who couldn't fulfill his promise. So a special object of Satan's hatred and a special target for his destructive attack has been Israel, the Jews.

[4 : 28] As a church, you'll hear often about Israel and the Jews because we're watching as God had fulfilled his promise to them. And we watch as our understanding, our hermeneutic, our understanding of the Bible is very important that we recognize them as they are being spoken about.

So there we have the woman in which the nation of Israel, which this baby will be born of, the Messiah, the promised one of Genesis chapter number 3, the blessing to all nations as it was said there to Abraham.

But secondly here, we have the dragon, the defeated dragon. Verse number 3, And there appeared another wonder in heaven, and behold a great red dragon, red representing blood and death, having seven heads and ten horns.

Learned later in Revelations, it represents seven different empires or nations with rule. And seven crowns upon his head. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and did cast them to the earth.

And the dragon stood before the woman, which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. This dragon is the same serpent that we meet in the garden.

[5 : 36] So when the dragon saw that the Most High God had fashioned mankind in his own image, that he had made them the rule over the earth, he was enraged. He burned with a bitter hatred, and he longed to shatter these images of the one he hated most.

We are created in the image of God, and because of that, the dragon, Satan, he hates us. Because we can reflect and worship and glorify God, we will always be objects of his hatred.

So the serpent in the garden, the devil, which means slanderer, and Satan, which means accuser, and the deceiver of the whole world. This is how Jesus speaks about him.

He calls him the wicked one, or the prince of the world to be cast out. The Pharisees called him Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. Paul calls him the god of this world, and the prince of the power of the air.

And he is not alone. Satan is the ruler of an evil system. One-third of the angels, as it was already said in this verse, went with him when he was cast out.

[6 : 43] And so the dragon would enjoy one great triumph. He would succeed in stealing the king's glory by defacing the king's image, woven into the very flesh and bone of these feeble humans.

So that's where we're at in the garden, with a serpent and mankind. But before then, before the garden, this is how Jesus speaks about Satan. In Luke 10, 18, he says, And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

In Isaiah, we learn more about it. Satan's fall must have occurred somewhere at the time where after angels were created, and before he was tempting Adam and Eve.

For you see, the dragon, too, was a creature, having been fashioned by the king at creation, though not as a dragon, but as a magnificent prince, as an angel who was to do what all of God's creation was to do, which is to worship and bring glory to him.

Satan's very attentive in the garden. The serpent is very attentive in the garden. He doesn't overlook what's being said. When it says, I will put enmity between thee and the woman and bruise thy seed and her seed, it shall bruise thy head, and that shall bruise his heel.

[7 : 54] I know that many times as I read through the Bible, and maybe many of you in here are making plans in the new year to read through your Bible, which would be a wonderful thing to do, to set out on.

But I remember reading past that verse many times and it not setting off any radars or meaning anything to me. I just read it. But let me tell you this, that when that serpent heard that promise from God, he knew that war had been declared.

He knew that his defeat had been set, that the day of his destruction had been guaranteed. And so the dragon attempts to stop the one who has come to destroy his works.

So Satan, he'll try to prevent any male child from coming. So when Adam and Eve have two children, Cain and Abel, he makes a decision and he decides one of these could be that one.

And he stirs in Cain's heart to want to kill his brother. When Pharaoh moves to kill all the Hebrew babies born in Exodus chapter one and two, he works on the life of Saul to kill David because it's of the line of David that this Messiah will come.

[9 : 02] Athaliah in 2 Chronicles chapter number 22 verse 10, trying to kill all the royal line of the Jewish people. Haman plots a genocide to kill all Jewish people in the book of Esther.

And then he moves on Herod to kill Jesus. Matthew 2, 16. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wrath and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem and all the coast thereof from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.

But he fails time and time again. In the whole book of Romans, 16 chapters, we have a reference to this devil, the Satan, in Romans 8.38 where it says, For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come.

That would be a reference to Satan and all those that had went with him. But it's at the end of the book where there's one statement that is made about this accuser, about this dragon.

And this is what it tells us. Romans 16, 20. And the God of peace shall brew Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

[10 : 23] Amen. The God of peace shall brew Satan under your feet. And again, he tells us when it's going to happen. And the answer is shortly. So what is it you need to know about this dragon?

The dragon has been decisively defeated in the death and resurrection of Christ. The dragon is being defeated now by Christ through Christians who speak the word of God and put on the whole armor of God.

And the dragon will finally be vanquished and thrown into the lake of fire, never to deceive or torment the world again. And so I can see now why Tinsley told me that it was going to feel odd to speak about Satan on the birthday of Christ.

But we don't fully understand and appreciate the gift that we're given at Christ if you don't recognize the state that you would be in the day without him. Christmas is not about a dragon.

Christmas is not about the evil one. Because of the birth of Christ, it's about him. It's about our Savior. But if it wasn't, every day would be about the dragon. Every day would be about our shame. Every day would be about our guilt.

[11 : 24] Every day would be about our condemnation. So because of Christ, the day is not about a dragon. But without Christ, the day and every day would be. We would be in captivity.

And so this brings us to the warrior child. Revelation 12, 11. And they overcame him, the dragon, by the blood of the lamb, by the word of their testimony.

And they loved not their lives unto the death. Despite the dragon's vigilance, the slayer appeared at first undetected. The snake had not foreseen such a mystifying entrance.

When he awoke to the danger, he recognized in terror, his long-expected foe was the very son of the high king. It was a song. Isn't it amazing how he came?

Where was he looking? Where was the dragon looking? Where was Herod looking? He wasn't looking that he was going to come and be born of two peasants. People, those that could not make the sacrifice, but they were to give two doves in the place.

[12 : 27] Those that went to a place and there was no room for them. Those that did not have great means. There he came and took on flesh. And so we sing and we ask this question, what child is this?

And we answer that. We ask the question in the song and we answer it many times. What child is this? This child is the promised one in the garden that will come and crush the head of the serpent.

He is the one that will die on a cross for you and me. He is the one who will destroy Satan. Hebrews 2.14, For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he, being Jesus, also himself likewise, took part of the same, that through the death he might destroy him that had the power of death.

That is, don't miss it, that is the devil. And so it's very clear in Scripture that he came and took on flesh and blood as us so that he may destroy the power of death.

That is the devil. And so Satan doesn't stop at the manger. During the time of temptation, Satan tried to get Jesus to violate God's law and to worship him instead of God.

[13 : 38] Matthew 4.1, Then was Jesus led up to the spirit and to the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And what does he offer him? He says, I'll give you all the kingdoms of the world, Jesus, if you would just worship me.

See, this end game for Satan is as long as you don't worship God, you're worshiping him. That's all that he wants. He doesn't need you to be a Satan worshiper. He doesn't need you to read the books of Satan. He doesn't need any of those things.

If you don't worship the God of heaven, then he wins because that's all he is working towards is to distract away from that. Satan is the one that puts into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him in John 12, 13, 2.

And so Satan wakes up on the morning of the resurrection as some of your kids woke up this morning for Christmas with great expectation, with great belief.

But then when he woke up on the day of the resurrection, he woke up to an incredible nightmare. The great serpent looked upon the risen Jesus, bewildered. Then the terrible truth dawned upon this ancient liar with blinding brightness.

[14 : 44] He had not crushed the crusher. He had slain the Lamb of God. He had not seen it. How had he not seen it? How had he not seen an altar of sacrifice and the Roman cross?

An altar. An altar for sins. Who sins? Not the unblendished sons, but fallen mankind. It was on that cross that Jesus Christ died in our place.

And it was on that day that out of great expectation, this Satan, this dragon, woke up to realize that God's plan had happened.

So whatever glory the dragon thought he had grasped in his terrible claws, the son had just snatched it away. And in the end, Satan serves to magnify the power, wisdom, love, grace, mercy, patience, and wrath of Jesus Christ.

A common question, one that you might have even asked as we've been in here this morning. Why not just do away with him right now? He has all power. It would be nothing for him. There's no equal balance in this world.

[15 : 47] There's no both power. Satan can't do any bidding without being allowed, and he'll be destroyed when he says that it's going to happen. And so God could show his power at any moment in taking Satan and casting him into a lake of fire.

But he destroys him in so much more grand fashion. In Colossians 2.15, And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphantly over them in it.

Jesus destroys the dragon's work in such a great way that it brings shame to him. That our lives bring shame to the dragon as we will glorify God.

So in Revelation 2, where it says, She brought forth a man-child. That's the incarnation. That is God coming in human flesh so that he could die for us. But there's a day that is coming that will be his coronation where he is seen as the king.

It will not be a Supreme Court made up of nine or 12 or 15, but he will rule with a rod of iron. His say will be final. So we live between the time of the incarnation and the time that he is king, the coronation, but now he is at an exalted place.

[16 : 58] And those five verses, we run through an incredibly fast timeline of history, don't we? And it says, verse number five, and it says, And her child was caught up in the God and to his throne.

After the resurrection, the son goes to exalted place, to the right hand of the father, to the place that the dragon desired, to the place that was being magnified, to show that he has defeated, that he has won.

The dragon couldn't stop the birth of Christ and he cannot stop his kingdom. So today we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the only one who could slay the dragon.

Verse 11, And they overcame him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives until the death. One of my favorite quotes read years ago says, Fairy tales don't tell children that dragons exist.

Children already know that. Fairy tales tell children that dragons can be killed. We all know inside of us that there's a dragon, that in this world, that there's something that's over our shadow, that there is dark evil, that there's someone that is against us.

[18 : 10] But in the story of Christmas, in the story of the gospel, we hear there is one that can slay the dragon. We know the dragon exists, and we have seen him hurt many people.

We see him lead many people away, as he did in the garden, in the darkness and the deception. Satan is the one who has deceived the world. Revelation 12, 9, And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the devil.

And Satan, which deceiveth the whole world, he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. So what is he doing today? He's doing the same thing that he did in the garden, is deceiving people.

We know what his first lie was. Did God say? His first lie was the questioning, the authority of God's word. And I know what his first lie was upon this earth, but I don't know what his latest lie is.

I don't know what the latest lie is that's being told, that may be being told to you. But it has no doubt that it has to do with the authority of God. There's no doubt that it has to do about the goodness of God.

[19 : 14] Ask you in here, when was the last time you heard the Satan, the accuser of the brother, ask that question? Hath God said? Or calls you the question, would God withhold this from you?

Would God withhold a good thing from you? He desires to keep a world in darkness. 2 Corinthians 4, 4, And whom the God of this world hath blinded the mind of them which have believed not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

And so at Christmas today, and we'll sing here shortly, and as we will sing, we will rejoice in the fact we have gained victory over the accuser's accusations against us.

This dragon is called an accuser. In verse number 10 it says, For the accuser of our brethren is cast down. The deceiver, Satan's power of accusation keeps man in slavery, the sin.

In the great Christmas classic, It's a Wonderful Life. How many of you like that one? It says here, It's a Wonderful Life, and you know Clarence, he says this, So there's a man down on earth that needs our help.

[20 : 22] He is sick. Is he sick? Clarence asks. He says, No worse. He's discouraged. How many of you knew that, right? It says, Is he sick? No, he's not sick.

He is discouraged. That there's something that could be worse about a person than them being sick is that they could be discouraged. But there's a type of discouragement that is just much greater than not getting the Christmas bonus.

It's much greater than things not coming together. There is a discouragement all the way unto our death. It's worse than just somebody not living up to their expectations.

It's an accusation that you know that is true. It's in the atonement. It's in the Jesus Christ being born of a man, living a perfect life, and then dying in our place, and his death being an atonement for our sins.

In the atonement, Jesus cancels the record of debt and gloriously removes Satan's accusation and power. So, brothers and sisters, when Satan accuses you of being a grievous sinner, you respond to him with this, you're right, I am, but I have a greater Savior than my sin, and he has given me salvation, and power, and a kingdom, and authority of my Messiah, and I have been delivered, and I am safe from your accusations now and forever.

[21 : 45] Jesus Christ coming, the slave of the dragon, transforms our fight for holiness. Jesus closes now with the armor of righteousness, and he shatters Satan's power of accusation, so that there's no longer any condemnation.

And our treasure in Christ, above all the promises of sin, and Satan, is part of the triumph in this war. So we should let Satan, the dragon, know he is defeated. As James 4, 7 says, submit yourselves therefore to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

He has been defeated, and we have been given victory, and our task now is to live in that victory, and to make Satan know his defeat. So, Tinsley, Christmas is not about the dragon.

However, it would not be for Christ, we would be standing today, shaking in this shadow, knowing that none of us could slay this dragon. That's where we would be the day. There would be no celebration on December 25th, there would be no celebration of Christmas, but we would live, and we would all die underneath the condemnation of our own sins.

But because Jesus Christ came and lived the perfect life, he has overcome him. He has overcome the accuser of the brother. And so what a wonderful gift. Not only do we get heaven because of the atonement that was made for us, and not only is our sins paid for, but now in our fight of holiness, we are no longer in bondage, we are no longer slaves to sin, because one that is greater than us has come and has fought the fight in our place.

[23 : 22] Here in a moment, I'm going to pray, and I'm going to thank God for that gift that we received on this Christmas day, and then we're going to sing a song, A Mighty Fortress is Our God. There's nothing Satan wants more than to eat away at your faith in Christ.

Satan wants nothing more than for you to forget who you are in Christ. And may our study of the day allow your hearts to rejoice as we will sing, The Prince of Darkness Grim, we tremble not for him.

His rage can, we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure, one little word shall fail him. What an incredible gift we've been given by Jesus Christ, and all that he has done on our behalf as he came to this earth, lived the perfect life, and died in our place.

And so maybe it's as a Christmas present that was underneath your tree that you forgot about. I want to remind you that this Jesus in coming does more than just secure your eternity, but it's done something incredible and something wonderful in your life right now.

And when you feel like you and your family are in the shadow of that dragon, and you feel completely defenseless, and you feel like you can do nothing because the accusations he's made against you are just completely true, you can stand and say to him, you are right, my sin was great, but my Savior is greater, and he came to slay the dragon.

[24 : 45] Heavenly Father, I thank you for this Christmas story, Lord. I thank you for what all that your Son did and accomplished on our behalf in coming to earth, Lord.

It is amazing, Lord. As we look at Genesis, we just wonder what is it you're going to do. As a serpent believes that he has you in a position, Lord, where you could do nothing, Lord, you come to earth and you rescue us.

Lord, you take us away from the bondage of our sin. And Lord, we gather the day and we rejoice in this. With every head bowed and every eye closed, I won't take much time, but as Kristen plays, would you take a moment there in your seat and would you just thank God for this gift?

Yes, the atonement and the death in your place, but also the victory that he has gained for you. Are you living? Are you making full use of the gift that has been given to you?

We hide ourselves today in Christ as our fortress. He is the one that can overcome the evil one. Heavenly Father, I thank you for an opportunity to meet with my brothers and sisters today, Lord.

[25 : 53] And I thank you for the message of Christmas. And Lord, we rejoice today in what it is that you have done on our behalf, Lord. Our sin is great, Lord, but you are greater.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.