

The birth of Christ from the throne room of God

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[0 : 00] Well, we're at that time of year where we revisit familiar passages of Scripture concerning the period of year that it is, namely the birth of Christ, the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But what I would like to do this morning is to turn your attention to the book of Revelation and we're going to look at the birth of Christ from the perspective of the throne room of God.

So it is the story of Christ's birth, but it is told from a different perspective than what the Gospels tell it from. So if you'd like to turn to Revelation chapter 12 and we'll read verses 1 through to 6.

So Revelation 12, beginning at verse 1, now hear God's word.

And a great sign appeared in heaven, and a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of 12 stars.

[1 : 26] She was pregnant and 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 head 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 is to rule the nations with a rod of iron. But her child was caught up to God and to his throne.

And the woman fled and into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

Well, many of us are familiar with the birth of Christ as told, let's say, from the book of Matthew or from the book of Luke.

[2 : 37] Many of us may be familiar with the promises made in Zechariah and in Isaiah concerning the birth of Christ and other prophets as well, not necessarily speaking of his nativity, the birth, but speaking of other aspects of Christ.

And many of us might even be aware of the first promise being made right after the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden. Not what's known as the proto-evangel, the proto-evangelium, which means the first promise of Christ was made in Genesis 3, verse 15, that the one who would defeat Satan would be born of the seed of a woman.

So everything revolves around these beautiful pictures that God gives us, promises, images, so that we would understand what God is about to do.

But as we come to the book of Revelation, we begin to see the nativity or the birth of Christ from the perspective of the throne room.

And of course, this allows us to see things which we cannot see if we were simply to read Matthew or Luke or other passages in the Old Testament.

[3 : 59] We get to see things here from a different point of view, and that's the point that is being addressed here in Revelation chapter 12.

Now, with that in mind, what's also important is God knows that we need his word, because man shall not live by the bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

But more importantly, or rather as importantly, God knows what we need to hear. It's not just that we need to hear his word. He knows what words we need to hear.

Because if it is the case that man shall not live by bread alone, and therefore every word of God we are to live by, those words must be a source of nourishment.

They must be a source of feeding us. They must be a source of building us up and making us strong and keeping us living and living in the way that God wants us to. Therefore, it's not just a case of any meal will do, but rather it's a case of these specific meals, this specific food is what you need to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[5 : 12] These are the words, out of all the words that God could have chosen, out of all of the ways that God could have written down the account that he has given us, this is the way that he has done it, and he has done so, so that we would take from it that which we need.

Why? Because man shall not live by bread alone. It is a deceitful thing to say, Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, to convince or even to tell a man that it is possible for him to live his life on food alone.

It's not possible. It's not possible to live the life that God has given you simply by natural and material resources because you are not simply a natural and material person.

You are more than that. And therefore, what Revelation is constantly doing throughout its entire letter is reminding us of the reality that from the throne room, everything is conducted on earth.

Remember the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray? May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Who dictates the terms of what happens on earth?

[6 : 28] Well, it's what is ever happening in the throne room of God. So it's important that we read the book of Revelation so that we can understand the movements that take place down here on earth because everything is directed by what happens and said in the throne room of God.

So what we have here in Revelation 12 this morning is the birth of Christ from the perspective of the throne room and what surrounds the birth of Christ as well.

Now, an important thing to realize here is that God not only knows the beginning from the end, but God sees the beginning and the end as one event.

No, we don't because we live within time and we have histories and we have a future and we have the present and the things that have happened have happened in the past and the things that are happening are now and the things that will happen are yet to come, which we don't always get to see.

But from God's point of view, as he knows the beginning from the end is not just because he is God, but because he is the creator God who creates both.

[7 : 37] And as he looks at that, he sees it as one event. He's able to see everything in its time frame as we would see it, but he's able to see it all at once.

And so as we read the book of Revelation, as we read about the birth of Christ, we're able to see these things joined together in a way that perhaps we wouldn't see if we simply read through the nativity according to Matthew.

And the reason for this is not only that we would have hope and a certainty, but that you would be full of courage and be encouraged as Christians as you live in a world where sometimes it looks like, if I can use the image of Revelation, it looks like the dragon's winning.

I have a good friend who says that the whole storyline of the Bible, and we teach this to our children, is basically this. That the knight kills the dragon and gets the girl.

There's the whole Bible in one phrase. Kill the dragon and get the girl. The dragon being Satan, the girl being the church, and the savior being Christ, who kills the dragon and gets the girl.

[8 : 53] There's the Bible overview. There you have it. You'll never forget it. In one simple phrase, kill the dragon and get the girl. Why do you think it is that fictional writers come up with stories where you have a hero, a dragon, and someone to be defeated?

Where do you think they get that from? Well, it's quite obvious where they get it from. It's built into the very fabric and the structure of this world, because that's what God has done.

It's built into the very fabric and the world, and it's built into the world, and it's built into the world. It's built into the world. It's built into the world. It's built into the world. And we are the girl. We have been saved by the knight, by the savior, by Messiah.

So that's really the sort of overview that Revelation wants us to have. Let's get into the details. Well, you'll notice in verse 1 that we're in the throne room of God.

Now, you may not notice that from chapter 12, but if you read through the book of Revelation, you would realize that all of these conversations and visions, what John sees and what John hears happens within the presence of God.

[9 : 58] It happens within the throne room. It's not happening for him down on earth. He's in a different realm, as it were, and he's seeing and hearing things, and what he sees is often different than what he hears, and what he hears is often different than what he sees.

And you can go back to the ascension of Christ in Revelation 4 and 5, where you get to see the ascension of Christ from the throne room perspective as well.

So a lot of revelation is historical, at least it is for us. You know, most of this has already happened. And that's one of the joys of being able to see this.

But it begins here by telling us the story, the true story of the history of the woman and the pregnant woman.

It reveals that people have been waiting for these promises throughout time because people live within time. It shows us that God will bring things to fulfillment through a promised child who will not be destroyed, but who will be enthroned.

[11 : 04] And the very first promise of that child being given of the seed of the woman is in Genesis chapter 3. And therefore, it also speaks of a spiritual reality that what we're dealing with here is not just a natural birth for natural means and natural purposes, but there is a spiritual dimension here where God is sending from heaven his son.

And within that, there is incredible danger for the son because the dragon seeks to destroy the child, but at the same time, the child will be protected and ascends into heaven, sits at the right hand of God.

The dragon being Satan, the woman, as we will see, is not only Eve and Israel. Israel and Mary, but it is them throughout history.

So what we learn here is the birth of Christ, the protection of Christ, and the ascension of Christ from the perspective of the throne room.

Also, we recognize that God cannot be destroyed, and therefore, whatever God brings into existence and whatever God accomplishes, it can never be undone. I need you to appreciate and realize that as you sit here this morning, whatever state your Christian life is in, whatever condition your life is in when it comes to truly following God as you are meant to, you need to appreciate and understand that none of these things that are spoken of here can be undone.

[12 : 38] The resurrection of Christ cannot be undone, as if it doesn't make any difference. The ascension of Christ cannot be undone. It has happened. The birth of Christ, all of these things have happened, and therefore, they make a difference.

And therefore, it is always the case that our lives must come in line to be lived within line of God's revealed word and never the other way around, as if the future is somehow not written yet, as if it's all up in the air, as if it's raw material that somehow has to be organized and shaped, and we will work it out as we go along, as though the future can be something different than what God has planned it to be.

And that's not the case. If you think it is, if you think that you're dealing with raw material ahead of you, that you can simply shape to whatever shape you want it to have, to somehow shape your own future, you're dealing with the wrong person.

That is not the way the future works. God knows the end from the beginning, and he knows it because it is planned. It is ordered. It is structured.

And we fit within that beautiful plan of God as his people. So here in verse 1, notice how the first great sign is of a woman who appears in heaven, and she is clothed with the sun, and the moon is under her feet, and on her crown is 12 stars.

[14 : 09] And the first question we ask is, and who is this woman? Well, this woman is also pregnant, and therefore we get a bit of a clue within the book of Revelation.

But we should, if we've read all the other books up to Revelation, we should know by now who this woman is. And of course, this woman is Eve. This woman is also Israel.

And this woman is, of course, also Mary. Because the promise of that child being given was given to Eve, the mother of all living.

How could that be? That the very couple that brought death and sin into this world, where the death came in through one man, Adam. How is it that Adam could have the naming ceremony, as it were, of his wife, who was just then called the woman?

How could he call her Eve, the mother of all living, when God has just pronounced that the day you eat of the tree, you will surely die? In what sense does it make any sense to call your wife the mother of all living, if the very action that you have done has brought death to everyone?

[15 : 18] Well, of course, Eve would be a type of Mary, or Mary is the new Eve. She is the one who would bring forth the Savior, the seed of a woman.

Now, of course, throughout Israel's history, Israel also understood that the Messiah would come from her. And all the promises that we have throughout history that are made to Israel, of this one

who would come, this Messiah who would save, is spelled out clearly in the promise made to David in 2 Samuel 7, that his son, the son of David, which is not Solomon, of course, because Solomon's kingdom does not last forever.

Therefore, we have to look beyond Solomon to someone else. His kingdom does last forever. And, of course, we notice throughout the whole of the Old Testament, there are cycles that God has given.

And, in fact, one of the first Bible studies I did in this church, over 10 years ago now, was a series called The Unfailing Promise. And I showed you the promise of Christ throughout all of the Old Testament.

And what we have throughout the whole of the Old Testament is the problems of death, the cycle of death. And every time you get a good leader, he dies. And then he's replaced, if it's a judge, by a bad judge.

[16 : 43] And you're hoping he dies quickly, because you want to now a good judge. And you begin to ask these questions as you read the book of Judges. Well, what does the world need? And what it needs is a good and perfect judge who will live forever.

And we're constantly waiting throughout the whole of the Old Testament for this good and perfect judge who will live forever. So people know what they want, they know what's needed, but they're having to wait for the promises to be filled.

And then, of course, we get to the king and King David, and everyone assumes this is it. But it's not it. And then David assumes that his son will be it, but it's not him either.

Because David sinned, Solomon sinned, Solomon was known as the half-hearted king. And so you were longing for this good and perfect king who would live forever.

But even the good kings died. And so we're constantly looking for someone who can fulfill the promises that have been made.

[17 : 49] But the promise was clear from the beginning. But there's another sign that appears in heaven, and that is of a red dragon, fallen from heaven, seeking to destroy the child when the child is born.

Verse 4. But the child is protected, as you will read, and rises to the throne room of God. And this child is the child who will rule the nations with a rod of iron.

And so behold your God. Behold your God, who at this very moment has ascended, or has already ascended to the Father, who is in the throne room, and who rules this world, rules the nations with a rod of iron.

Who do you think is in control of this world? When you go out to work, who do you really think is in control? When you live in difficult times and evil times, and you see tragedies, and who's really in control?

When it looks like evil has got the upper hand, who has really got the upper hand? And this is the beauty of seeing the nativity, the birth of Christ, the protection of Christ, and the ascension of Christ from the perspective of the throne room, because we get to appreciate who is in control.

[19 : 14] So you may feel, sat here this morning, that the church is losing its influence in the world, that we are losing the battle, but who's in control?

It's not you, and it's not them in the world, but it is God who rules with a rod of iron, rules the nations. You need to appreciate that.

Well, here's the main point, isn't it? Throughout the whole of the Bible, God's people have been waiting for the Savior, and they're waiting, and they're waiting, but from the perspective of the throne room, we get to realize that there's more here that we must pay attention to.

There is an enemy that seeks to destroy the one that we're waiting for. He doesn't, but that's what he seeks to do. Now, the first promise ever made concerning the Savior, the one who would defeat Satan, crushed the head of the serpent, as it's put in Genesis 3.15, is the one who would be born of the seed of a woman.

And as he crushes Satan, he too will suffer. His heel will be bruised. But Satan would be defeated, and that was mentioned in Genesis.

[20 : 31] So right from the very beginning, people are having to live in a world where they recognize that there is a deceiver, that there is an enemy of God and an enemy of God's people, but God has promised that that enemy will be defeated.

And so this isn't just about waiting for the Savior. This is also about waiting for the one who will defeat your enemy. This is about waiting for the one who will defeat evil and who will defeat death. This is what people are waiting for. They're not just waiting for the Savior to come, but it's everything that comes with the Savior. So Genesis 3.15 is the promise of the end as well as the beginning, that Satan will be destroyed.

But imagine waiting year after year, and every time you have a good judge or every time you have a good king or every time it looks as if the Messiah has come and then he hasn't come. Your hopes are up and down and up and down.

And we know that through the prophets, the promises that are given to them about how the Messiah will come and who the Messiah will be, we begin to realize that Israel is this woman pregnant, that she is the one who will give birth to the son of David.

[21 : 54] She is the one who will bring forth Israel, but it's like a long, drawn-out, painful labor that no one quite knows when this child will be born.

They know that they're pregnant, if I can put it that way. They know they're expecting, but they have no idea when the birth will happen. And, you know, this is just something we see time and time again throughout Israel's history, this sense of waiting and waiting and thinking that you're there, and then you have to wait a little longer.

But the way this woman is described, of course, in Revelation, of the sun, the moon, and the stars in particular, reminds us of Joseph's dream. And Joseph, of course, was a type of Jesus.

The story of Joseph is to teach us what to expect when Christ comes. That Joseph is the one who is mistreated by his own family.

And when Christ comes to his own, he is not received by them. Joseph is a type of the one who is to come. And so this woman is Israel. But it's not just Israel.

[23 : 09] It starts with Eve. Israel. But it's also Mary. Because Mary is the one who is pregnant. And Mary is the one who will give birth to a son.

And Mary is the one who is a virgin. And as she gives birth, it's not... And as she gives birth to the son, she is known as the mother of Jesus.

But we know from the very beginning that her son is a miraculous son. There's no human intervention. Just as it was promised to Eve.

Now this may not be easy to see as you read throughout the Old Testament. But as you get to see it from the perspective of the throne room, suddenly everything fits. Everything becomes clear.

Suddenly you can see what God has always been doing. And one of the things that you must appreciate this morning is that the future is already planned and is set out.

[24 : 14] We simply are going to live through it and trusting in God all the way. And if that doesn't fill you with courage and encouragement and hope, this is like winning because you've won already.

This is what you have as Christians this morning. But it raises the question, doesn't it? That how will you recognize the son when he is born?

Right? How will you recognize this person when he is born? Not when he gets older and he begins to do miraculous signs and he proclaims the word of God.

You remember how Jesus walks into the towns and the villages and he starts teaching and people are amazed and they say, we've never heard anything like this. And then he heals the lame and he causes the blind to see and the deaf to hear and suddenly these kingdom signs of a king allows us to appreciate, well, no one else can do this but God.

Therefore, you know, when you get those questions throughout the Gospels, you know, no one can forgive sins but God alone. Jesus is forgiving sins.

[25 : 31] So, work it out. But how do you recognize that person as a child? How do you recognize the Messiah as a child?

Well, there is a clue, isn't there? And the clue is found in the one who seeks to destroy the child. The one who seeks to destroy the woman's child.

The dragon. Satan is the one who seeks to destroy this child. And so, when you get to the birth of this child, the birth of this child will be surrounded by what?

Attempts to take his life. And so, when you actually get to read like Matthew and Luke and you get to read the Nativity about the wise men and about Herod, suddenly you begin to realize that it is surrounded by danger.

The wise men are warned not to go back to Herod. And so, they depart another way. And Herod, as you will remember, orders the killing of every baby under the age of two.

[26 : 43] Surrounded by danger and evil, absolute evil. Why? Because of the attempt of the dragon to take the life of this child.

And yet, the child is protected. Now, of course, in the book of Revelation, it just says that the child ascends to the throne room of God. And we know that there's so much more in between the birth and the ascension.

There is the life, there is the death, there is the resurrection, and then there is the ascension. But the reason why Revelation only mentions the ascension is because by implication, you understand that you can only have an ascension if all the other stuff is also true.

And so, the way that we recognize the birth of Christ is not just because of the angels that come and sing glory to God in the highest, it's not just because of Simeon who beholds the Savior in his arms and recognizing that he can now depart in peace, he can now pass away to glory and go to be with God because he recognizes that this is the promised Messiah, but also because that this child is surrounded by danger.

attempts to take his life. The dragon seeks to destroy the child, but of course the child lives, and the child dies on his own terms for the purposes of God, to reconcile man back to him and God to us.

[28 : 17] I don't know if I can think of anything more evil than the evil that is seen in trying to kill the one who can defeat evil.

There are many evil things, but there surely is nothing more evil than evil trying to destroy the very thing that can destroy evil. that's evil.

That evil is trying to give itself a long life span by killing the Savior, but God would have none of it. Jesus Christ is the one who puts an end to evil because he puts an end to the evil one, and in putting an end to the evil one, he puts an end to those evil ways, and that's the nativity from the perspective of the throne room, that this child will not be defeated by the one who seeks to defeat him, but will defeat the dragon, the deceiver of nations, will defeat the enemy, will defeat evil.

And so we see from the very beginning of scripture that God's people have always had to live by faith in the promises of God. They've always had to trust God in difficult times, and those difficult times have been evil times, times filled with absolute evil, and yet the promises of God stand, and the promises of God have been fulfilled.

[29 : 53] And so to put it another way, if I can, that the retelling of the nativity from the perspective of the throne room may not be one that you are used to, but nonetheless it is true and present within Matthew and Luke, you just don't get to see it in the same way.

That behind Herod killing those children is the dragon trying to take the Savior's life. That's what's actually happening there.

Well, let's conclude this passage. As we think again and again, no doubt again, about the birth of Christ over these next few weeks and this period of time, it's important to really appreciate what Christ has achieved.

It's important to understand that God has kept his promises in the past and therefore he will keep his promises in the future. It is also important for you to appreciate just the work of God and how it cannot be undone.

As if people can live as though it doesn't make any difference. No, it makes all the difference in the world, in this world. Not just a turn of phrase, but it makes all the difference in this world.

[31 : 13] Now, it may be a long time before we actually get to see the final glorification and the final defeat where the evil and the sinfulness of this world is finally separated from us who belong to God, but you need to realize that evil will never, ever triumph.

this is what evil seeks to do, so pay attention. Evil seeks to convince you how evil evil is, but it goes further than that.

Not only does evil seek to convince you how evil evil is, it seeks to convince you that God doesn't do anything about it. evil.

And that's not the case. There's lots of evil in the world. God doesn't do anything about it.

But God has done something about it. He has defeated the evil and evil will come to an end and he has, in the death of Christ, you have the death of death, as John Owen put it brilliantly.

[32 : 36] The death of death in the death of Christ, only a Puritan could say something like that, or close to being a Puritan. Beautiful. But that's the deception that comes with evil.

It convinces you how bad it is, not how good it is. And then it tries to convince you that God has done nothing about it.

Several years ago, I read a book by a man called Andrew Rees. I didn't finish the book and it's probably one of only a few books that I've never finished. And it's not because it was too difficult, though there have been a few books where I've had to put down and come back at a later date with dictionaries and all kinds of things to make my way through it.

But I couldn't read it because I couldn't cope with it because it was too upsetting. And it was the history of Auschwitz. And in the beginning of the book, Andrew Rees makes a very clear and brilliant distinction between Hitler and Stalin.

And the question that he unfolds is this one. Why is it that all of those men, soldiers, on both sides, under Hitler and under Stalin, did the things they did, even to their fellow men if they turned back from the battlefield?

[33 : 59] I'm talking about things like the German soldiers who turned back from fighting the Russians, and if they did, they were shot in the stomach by their own men. Evil, absolute evil.

No value for life whatsoever. And Andrew Rees poses the question, why is it that these men followed those men? And he draws this brilliant distinction and conclusion.

He says of Stalin, no one would ever disobey Stalin. Stalin. You obeyed Stalin because if you didn't, you're going to get it. It was coming to you.

He was a dictator. He was mean. He was hard. And he would kill you. But when it came to Hitler, now he had a totally new way, a different way.

He just convinced their soldiers that they were doing the right thing. the difference between the evil of Stalin and the evil of Hitler, Andrew Rees says, is that Stalin controlled that evil by being a dictator.

[35 : 07] And Hitler controlled it by making you believe it was the right thing to do. That's how evil Hitler was. Making you believe that this is the right thing to do.

So this world is full of evil. And that evil is often cloaked behind it's the right thing to do. But God has defeated the evil one.

And he has put an end to all that. So here we have the birth of Christ and all the troubles surrounding the birth of Christ. But in those troubles the defeat of the dragon is sure.

And what we read here in the book of Revelation is the birth and the ascension of Christ from the perspective of the throne room. And you should be encouraged that what has been accomplished cannot be undone.

Amen. Well may God's grace, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, be with you all now and forevermore.

[36 : 13] Amen. Amen. Amen.