

CHRISTMAS MEANS A CALL TO BATTLE STATIONS

Revelation 12:1-17

December 12, 2021

Matthew 1:18-21 gives us the best synopsis or summary of the reason for the Christmas season: *“This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about... She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”* This verse tells us very plainly that THE REASON FOR THE SEASON is that God was going to deal with the problem of SIN once and for all time. When sin entered the world back in the Garden of Eden, all of God’s good creation suffered the consequences, creation was defiled, and the world is filled with spiritual darkness, because the very first humans gave away dominion of this earth (the keys to this earth) to Satan. So, in the fullness of time, on that specific date God had circled on His calendar, God acted to rectify our desperate situation and get the keys of this earth back from our enemy, the devil. So, we celebrate Christmas because God sent His sinless Son Jesus as a LIGHT into the darkness until He returns. God sent His Son Jesus to defeat sin and death and reconcile everything back to Himself. And then, just before Jesus ascended back to His Heavenly Father, Jesus commissioned His followers to take over that role of being a LIGHT into the darkness of this world. So, we the church, the Ecclesia, are commanded to continue to shine the LIGHT that came into the world at Christmas into the darkness around us and take authority over Satan and his demonic realm!

However, our adversary, the devil, that ancient serpent – who is against the church, and against every follower of Christ who is shining the LIGHT of the Gospel into this dark world, will never give up and in fact as the end times get closer, Satan is going to continue turning up the heat. So, we need to realize that this world is a spiritual war zone, all because of what happened on that very first Christmas, that one event 2000 years ago when God became one of us and dwelt among us – as proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah, *“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel. Immanuel means God with us”* (Isaiah 7:14). God came and continues to be with us and live within us, and Satan is out for revenge and will never give up his assault against us. Satan has declared war against every believer because God has given us authority over the darkness around us, and it’s all because of that one event that changed history, which we celebrate every

Christmas. That event when God fooled Satan by taking on human flesh, something the devil never suspected!

At that's why I want us to look at the Christmas story from another perspective this morning – from the perspective of spiritual warfare, the battle we are in to reclaim this earth for Christ. In this Christmas story there is no baby in a manger, shepherds rejoicing or wise men bringing gifts and worshiping; however, there are angels, but they are not singing; rather, they are engaging in a great heavenly war of end-times proportions. In this Christmas story there's also a pregnant woman about to give birth to a son, ***“who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter,”*** but this story also includes a dark side – an enormous red dragon, who is ready to devour the woman's child the moment he was born. We often fail to realize that **Revelation 12:1-17** is also a Christmas story; however, it doesn't take place here on this earth, but in the spiritual realm, in the Heavenly realm. As well, this story does not begin in a city called Bethlehem, but thousands of years earlier in a Garden called Eden, when God made a promise to mankind to send a Saviour to deal with our sin problem, who will crush the serpent's head beneath His heel; thereby, reclaiming the keys to this world that were turned over to Satan in the Garden. That day when Satan took Adam and Eve hostage so that God couldn't touch him without destroying the crown of His creation, mankind.

Lucifer was one of the most powerful and beautiful angels created by God – he led worship in Heaven at one time, but Isaiah 14 tells us that Satan had fallen from his high position because of pride, and the devil is fighting mad about it, looking for revenge, and since Satan doesn't have the power to fight God, he knows he can do the next best thing – which is to attack God's followers. Satan can't touch God, but he can definitely affect God's creation, especially those who are made in God's image, and if it isn't for God's hand of protection over us, mankind would have been wiped out long ago. So Satan is ticked off and makes war against us, which means that Christ followers, believers who testify about Jesus and shine His LIGHT into this dark world, are in the front lines of attack. That's why we need to be covered daily in the protection of the armour of God and covered in prayer.

Christmas reminds us that we are in a spiritual war zone until Christ returns – so we can't ever let up! We celebrate Christmas as the first coming of Christ, but it's not the end of God's story, there is more to come. God has not fulfilled all of His promises as-of-yet, there is still more to be fulfilled. God's Word promises that Christ will return again one day, lock up Satan and his fallen angels for 1000 years,

bringing global peace to this earth when Christ will rule as King over all of God's creation, over every nation, government, and world ruler. And just like with His first appearing, Jesus will come again, in the fullness of time, a day God has circled on His calendar which will be at the right moment in modern history, and Satan is dreading that day. All because at His death and resurrection, Christ gave a death blow to Satan, which means victory has been assured, but the end for Satan has not come yet. So, as we wait for Christ's glorious reappearing, we are in an intense war zone, and that's why we need to be armed with His Word, covered with prayer and ready. We are not to be on vacation while Satan is still on the loose creating mayhem and destruction! That means that all believers are on active duty as soldiers of the cross. So, Christmas is not only about celebrating the birth of Jesus, but also about spiritual warfare, about manning our battle stations and actively engaged in fighting and driving back our enemy Satan until Christ returns!

Satan is the great deceiver, a master at keeping us preoccupied with needless battles and seeking comfort and pleasure in this life; thereby, being distracted from Kingdom work, and I believe Satan especially enjoys what Christmas has become here in Canada. I believe Satan enjoys watching us run around with all of our preparations, gift buying, partying, baking, and decorating; not having the time to focus on the REASON FOR THE SEASON; not having the time to focus on the first five letters of Christmas, CHRIST. Christmas has been turned into a festive holiday that is driven by out of control materialism, as consumerism continues to be alive and well, despite COVID. Here in Canada, we have come to realize, even in the church, that we need something other than Christ to give us joy, peace, contentment, and happiness. Christ is not enough whispers Satan in our ears! And Satan is especially happy to see us spending Billions of dollars on our Christmas celebrations while many parts of the world are struggling to survive, struggling to provide the very basics of life, food, clean water, and shelter. Many believers have been duped into playing Satan's game, especially during the Christmas season!

As we turn to **Revelation 12**, it begins with this great sign appearing in Heaven – ***“a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of 12 stars on her head.”*** The Roman Catholic church identifies this woman as the virgin Mary, while others identify her as the nation of Israel, but I believe the best representation of this woman is the victorious church that has overcome the powers of darkness (which are represented by the moon under her feet). I believe this woman is the true sanctified church, the vast army of well equipped believers who are carrying out the great work of Jesus, spreading Christ's glorious message to

every nation on this earth, despite opposition and persecution. I believe this woman clothed with the sun (often a symbol of Christ), is a picture of the radiant virgin bride of Christ, the church in these last days, who is carrying out Christ's kingdom work, and doing great damage to Satan's kingdom, the church who has taken their role seriously, as they are awaiting the arrival of their bridegroom who will be returning in the clouds at His second coming. This woman is pregnant and crying out in labour pains and agony because of the state the world is in as she anticipates the return of the Messiah to set things right, just as the nation of Israel agonized and suffered throughout the centuries of oppression by the Romans as Israel longed for her Messiah to come at His first appearing. And the world currently is once again in the same place, looking for a Messiah!

John now sees another frightening sign in Heaven – ***“a huge fiery-red dragon with ten horns and seven heads, each wearing a royal crown...And the dragon crouched before the woman who was about to give birth – poised to devour the baby the moment it was born”*** (Revelation 12:3-4). In **verse 9** the dragon is identified as the ancient serpent called the devil or Satan who slithered into the Garden and deceived mankind to give him rule over this earth, and since that time has destroyed numerous lives, deceived numerous believers, closed numerous churches, and controlled numerous nations in his revenge against God in these last days. **Verse 4** tells us his, ***“tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth,”*** which I believe refers to a previous event in Heaven when Satan first rebelled against God and 1/3 of the angelic hosts chose to follow him in his rebellion. Looking at the book of Job, the Bible seems to indicate that Satan and his angels still had access to Heaven after this first uprising, but after this war in Heaven described in **verses 7-9**, after the great dragon and his army are overpowered by Michael and his angels, they are banished and barred from the presence of God and Heaven forever. We are not told the timing of this battle; however, I believe this battle is going to take place at the mid-point, 3^{1/2} years into the seven years of the great tribulation, when Satan will pour out his full wrath on mankind because he only has 3^{1/2} years before he spends the next 1000 years chained in the Abyss – during the millennium reign of Christ!

Since God's declaration to the serpent in the Garden of Eden ***“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel”*** (Genesis 3:15), Satan has constantly tried to prevent this promised male child from being born to the woman. Satan has taken advantage of every opportunity to prevent this birth. Satan's first attempt

was in persuading Cain to kill Abel, but God retaliated with the birth of another son named Seth; then Satan sent his angels to mate with humans to taint the human gene pool, giving rise to the Nephilim, but God retaliated and whipped out this tainted DNA with a global flood; then Satan influenced Pharaoh to kill all of the Hebrew baby boys, but God retaliated by saving Moses who delivered God's people out of Egypt, putting them in the right geographical place for Christ's birth; years later Satan moved Saul to kill David and tried numerous times to destroy the royal line of David, but God retaliated by preserving David's line in Babylon; Satan influenced Haman to plot genocide against the Jews, but God raised up Esther; and lastly, Satan moved King Herod to kill Jesus, but God retaliated with a dream, instructing Joseph to flee with his family to Egypt. Satan failed every time! The birth of Jesus on that day in Bethlehem launched the defeat of the ancient serpent promised back in Genesis 3, and when Satan's last and final assault came at Calvary, Jesus rose from the dead, as John writes in **Revelation 12:5**, ***"And her child was caught up to God and his throne."*** The last attempt by Satan backfired, Jesus rose from the dead and ascension back to His Heavenly Father. Jesus now being seated at the right hand of the throne of God, is the unquestionable proof that Satan was defeated and stripped of his authority over us, all because Satan failed every step of the way to prevent Christ's victory over sin and death. Christ's resurrection and our future resurrection is the hope of the world!

And then **verse 6** tells us that the woman was also protected, ***"The woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days."*** As I said before, I believe this woman represents the victorious end-times church. Even though severe persecution will come to the body of Christ, especially during the time of the 7 year tribulation, as God has taken care of His people in the past, and continues to meet our needs in the present, He will not fail us in the future. We have God's Word that our salvation is an undisputed and settled reality according to **verses 10-12 (Passion Translation)**, ***"Now salvation and power are set in place, and the kingdom reign of God and the ruling authority of his Anointed One are established. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who relentlessly accused them day and night before our God, has now been (soundly) defeated – cast out once and for all! They conquered him completely through the blood of the Lamb and the powerful word of his testimony. They triumphed because they did not love and cling to their own lives, even when faced with death. So, rejoice you heavens, and every***

heavenly being! But woe to the earth and the sea, for the devil has come down to you with great fury, because he knows his time is short.”

These verses confirm that those who follow the Lamb of God are victorious over the dragon in two ways: **1)** the blood of the Lamb, because our sins have been washed away by the cleansing blood of the Lamb of God, so no accusation of the devil can stand against us; and **2)** the powerful word of their testimony (the witness of the martyred believers – they were faithful to the Gospel even unto death). Like these martyrs, when persecution comes, we need to remain faithful to the Gospel, even unto death. You will notice here in **verse 12** that those in Heaven and those on this earth who know the LAMB of God are called to rejoice, while woe is pronounced on those rebellious unbelievers who continue to stand in opposition to God, as indescribable hell will be poured out on this earth in the final days of tribulation, all because Satan is bent on destroying mankind, because we are made in the image of God and as retaliation for being kicked out of Heaven. But it doesn't have to be that way because the gift of salvation is still available today! There is still time to repent and turn towards God. The Bible is filled with warning-after-warning, all because God doesn't want any to be lost!

The celebration of Christ's birth every year by the singing of carols is a reminder to Satan that he is a defeated foe, and his end is getting closer each-and-every time we celebrate Christmas. And Calvary was the decisive and key battle where the final outcome of this war was settled and made clear as his keys to this earth were snatched out of his hands and given back to mankind, but Satan fights on, and his rage and hostility is only going to intensify against this woman described here in **Revelation 12**. But this woman (the true victorious church) will be supernaturally protected in two ways: **Verse 14 & 16**, ***“The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so she might fly to a place prepared for her in the wilderness, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half time (3^{1/2} years), out of the serpents reach...The earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.”***

We don't know where this place of protection will be, or what this supernatural act of nature will be, but what we do know is that God will make a way for His people during times of persecution. Our comfort and hope comes from the promise that in what-ever-way Satan comes against the woman (church), his efforts will continue to fail in the future as they have failed in the past. The gates of Hades (hell) will not prevail against Christ's church. Christmas reminds us that Heaven and earth

have now intersected, Heaven is available on this earth, all because 2000 years ago God landed on this enemy-occupied territory and took on a human form and human flesh, becoming one of us, and conquered the dragon through the defeat of the cross. The supernatural now intersects with the natural, and this is the ***“good news of tidings of great joy”*** (Luke 2:10) that Christmas proclaims, all because of ***“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”*** (which means ***“God with us”***) (Matthew 1:23). Christ is triumphant, as Martin Luther states, ***“we see here in (Revelation), that through and beyond all plaques, beasts, and evil angels Christ is nonetheless with His saints, and wins the final victory.”*** God is with us and the final victory is His!

1 John 2:18 gives us this warning that I believe is more relevant today than it was back when John wrote this, ***“Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.”*** John tells us here that we will know that Christ’s return is imminent, right around the corner when we notice that many antichrists are present in the world. When we read verses like this, we often think that the antichrist is a person that will come in the last days, who will lead the forces of evil in that great final battle of Armageddon, which is true; however, we miss the part that says, ***“even now many antichrists have come.”*** John is trying to warn us here to wake us up to the fact that there are many antichrists already here, and an antichrist doesn’t have to be a person, but can be anything that comes against the kingdom of God and the people of God, to keep the truth of the Gospel from going forward. There are numerous examples around us today: out-of-control consumerism; the political situation in passing ungodly laws; the sexual identity crisis; cancel culture – to name a few!

For Christians, because of the many antichrists – **Christmas means a call to battle stations.** As believers, whether we like it or not, we are living in spiritual warfare against the various antichrists in our society; thereby, we need to act more like soldiers than passive people on vacation. When Satan fell and took the other fallen angels with him, they started to abuse and misuse their authority on Earth (and we have stood by and let them, not standing up against the ungodly things taking place in society). So, instead of things working together in unity and in harmony, things are in disunity and in disharmony, the earth has now become a war zone against God’s Kingdom principals, and we are currently living in that war zone right here in Sombra. Throughout history, every culture upon this earth has had demons affect it in different ways; today, I believe our passivity is the

current demon of choice, the demon that is most effective and most damaging to God's kingdom here in Canada. We are in a battle for Christ and the Gospel message going forward, so we can't be passive and reluctant to make a stand for Christ!

The war effort began at that first Christmas – Satan didn't want the Christ child to be born, and especially to live to become and adult. But, 30 years after Christmas – Jesus grew up to become a man and during His short ministry demonstrated to the world how to live as a soldier of the cross. Jesus rebelled against these Satanic powers, these antichrists, by the way He lived His life, and He calls us to do the same. Jesus lived a radical life within society; He created waves wherever He went; He infuriated the religious leaders, by reaching out to those they neglected as not deserving their attention– the poor, the lame, the blind, the sick, the outcast, tax collectors and the worst of sinners. Jesus bucked the religious system of that day and started a revolution. Jesus fought back against the numerous antichrist powers at work in the world, and Jesus calls us to do likewise. So, when we decide to live a life that follows Christ, by not going along with the ungodly trends of society, we also begin a revolution, and like Jesus, may be crucified in the process!

It's wonderful to take a vacation every now and then, taking time off to relax and get refreshed and revitalised – but we can't live our whole lives with a vacation mentality and be faithful to the Gospel message, especially our commission from the risen Lord found in **John 20:21**, ***“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”*** Today, Canada is becoming increasingly ungodly, and we are being sent into this warzone to do what Jesus did! As Jesus' disciples we are commissioned, given marching orders, by our supreme Commander to carry on Christ's work of continuing His revolt against the Satanic forces on this earth, and speak against the antichrists as soldiers of the cross.

My closing comment is this: enjoy this Christmas season to the maximum with your family and friends as you celebrate the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. However, during the festivities, don't forget why Jesus came! Don't forget the REASON FOR THE SEASON, remembering to keep CHRIST at the centre of every Christmas celebration, and follow Christ's example, by turning all of Satan's tactics into the lies and deception that they truly are, and speak freedom and truth to all you celebrate with during this Christmas season.

Christmas is a message of peace on earth among men/women, young/old, rich/poor. It is Immanuel, God with us. It is God bending low to lift men up out of the sin and mire of a world that has forgotten God and His will for lost men. It is God in a cradle, the Eternal in a tender baby's flesh and form. But Christmas does not stop in Bethlehem. It reaches beyond to Calvary, to the empty tomb, and to God's throne in Heaven where the Savior currently sits, waiting for His enemies to become his footstool!

As the shepherds came to the manger, they saw the Christ child, and went forth to tell the glad tidings to all who would listen; as the Wise Men came from afar to worship and give gifts to him, so should the faithful today humbly bow before Him in praise and worship; and then go forth to declare the gospel to a lost world. We can celebrate Christ's birth because it reminds of Christ' victory on the cross and His future return for His radiant bride, the woman of Revelation 12. Be that victorious church that is willing to drive back the enemy whenever or wherever he raised his ugly head. Fight the battle before you as a soldier of the cross!