

## Advent 2025: Behind Enemy Lines, Revelation 12:1-6, Born for Battle, 12/7/25

**Classic Role- Door Holder #3 Video.** We love to keep adding characters to the Christmas story that aren't in the actual Christmas story? A third door holder... a drummer boy... a llama if you go to a really cool church.

But there's one main character in the nativity that no one ever casts. I've never seen him in a nativity set on the mantel, never sung about in a Christmas carol. And yet, according to the Bible this character was there. Do you know the one I'm talking about?

Well this Christmas story isn't in the Gospel of Luke or Matthew, it's actually in Revelation 12, and the character is a massive dragon with 7 heads. And as much as that sounds like it's something out of an indie sci-fi movie, I want to show you today that in many ways, it's a more accurate and critical understanding of what's actually happening at that nativity scene than what is often portrayed. Here in Revelation 12, the Bible is pulling back the curtain to reveal the real spiritual war taking place that first Christmas, and opens our eyes to a war that still rages on in our lives today. Let's read it.

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

**2** *She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. 3 Then another sign appeared in heaven:*

*an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads.*

**4** *Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth.*

*The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that it might devour her child the moment he was born.*

**5** *She gave birth to a son, a male child, who "will rule all the nations with an iron scepter."*

*And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.*

**6** *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.*

Merry Christmas! Nate, what is going on here? Let's unpack this cosmic Christmas story from Revelation to understand what God is showing us and why it matters for our lives today.

Chapter 12 sits at the very center of the revelation that the apostle John received and functions as a theological hinge that explains the spiritual conflict behind everything else happening in Revelation: Why is the church of God being persecuted, why is there cosmic evil, and how is all

of this going to end? John receives a great sign, an apocalyptic vision of what, or rather who is at the center of this spiritual conflict with three characters- A mother, a child, and a dragon.

So the first thing we need to do when reading symbolic literature like Revelation is identify the characters. The Child and the Dragon- that's pretty obvious right? The male child who is born to rule is Jesus the Messiah, and the reference to the iron scepter is linked directly to Psalm 2:9, a prophecy about the 2nd coming of the Messiah fulfilled in the future by King Jesus. The Dragon is pretty obvious as well. In fact we don't have to assume. **9 The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.**

**Who is the woman?** Her identity is actually *the key* to unlocking the whole vision. At first glance, you might think, “Well, she gave birth to the Messiah—so this must be Mary.” But the way she's described—clothed with the sun, crowned with twelve stars—suggests she's representing something far bigger than one individual.

Many scholars point to Old Testament Israel, God's covenant people. The twelve stars echo the twelve tribes and connect directly to Joseph's dream in Genesis 37.

Others see the woman as the church—God's people from its inception to the end of the age. Verse 6 speaks of her being nourished for 1,260 days, which seems to point toward the period of tribulation described later in Revelation. In this case the twelve stars could represent the twelve apostles—the foundation of the church.

So which is it? Is the woman Mary (who's team Mary)? Israel? The church?  
My answer is... **yes.**

Revelation often uses multi-layered imagery, and I believe that's what's happening here. The woman is a composite symbol: **She is Israel**, the people of God carrying the promise of the Messiah through the centuries. **She is Mary**, the faithful woman who brings the promised Child into the world in Bethlehem. **And she is the Church**, the people of God across the ages, pursued and persecuted by the dragon yet protected and sustained by God.

One symbol. Three layers. And together, they show us the sweeping story of God's people, God's promise, and God's protection from Genesis to Revelation.

With that understanding, let's ask the next question, **Why is this dragon [Satan] so hell-bent on devouring the child?** To answer that, we need to go all the way back to the garden of Eden. In Genesis 3, after Adam and Eve fall into sin through the deception of the serpent—the same being Revelation 12 later identifies as the dragon—God doesn't just pronounce judgment. He gives a *promise*. A breadcrumb trail leading straight to Christmas.

**Genesis 3:15. And I will put enmity between you (serpent) and the woman, and between your offspring and hers, he will crush your head, and you (serpent) will strike his heel**

This is the very first prophecy of a coming Savior. God says the story of humanity will unfold on a battlefield: the serpent and his offspring warring against the woman and her offspring. But one

day, a *particular* Son would come—a descendant who would confront the serpent face-to-face. Satan would wound Him... but that wound would not be final. The Son would crush the serpent's head, ending the war once and for all. This is what the Bible means when it talks about the Messiah.

And Satan knows it. He's not ignorant of this prophecy—he heard it with his own ears in Eden. From that moment on, his entire strategy has been singular and obsessive: **destroy the promised Seed before the Seed destroys him.**

This is why, all throughout Scripture, we see Satan repeatedly trying to cut off the Messianic line:

- In **Genesis 27**, Esau plots to kill Jacob—the chosen line of promise. But God protects him.
- In **Exodus 1–2**, Pharaoh orders the murder of Hebrew baby boys. But God preserves Moses and the people.
- In **1 Samuel**, Saul makes multiple attempts on David's life—the ancestor of the coming Messiah. But God shields him.
- In **Esther**, Haman nearly succeeds in wiping out the Jewish remnant entirely. But again, God intervenes.

From Genesis to Esther, from Egypt to Persia, from kings to genocidal plots, it's the same pattern every time: **Satan tries to stop the Messiah; God preserves the line.**

So what is Revelation 12 doing? It's pulling back the curtain on all of history. It's showing us the invisible war that's been raging from Eden to Bethlehem to the present day and into the future. At the center of that war stands Satan, fighting desperately to thwart God's plan of salvation.

At Christmas, the long-awaited Offspring of the woman finally arrives. The Messiah steps into the world—and immediately, Satan moves to strike.

That baby in the manger did not enter a peaceful world—He entered a battlefield. He was born for battle. He came to confront the serpent once and for all. And the battle reached its climax at the cross. Satan threw everything he had at Jesus. For a moment, it must have looked like the dragon had finally succeeded.

There must have been a victory rally in hell when Jesus' limp body was taken off of a cross and placed in a tomb. And Satan must have thought, "We've done it, boys. We've done it. We've destroyed the male child. We've destroyed the seed. The prophecy is nullified, and we have won." But to his horror, he realizes on the third day, he only struck his heel. Jesus rose from the grave: this is what is depicted in the child being taken up to the throne of God.

And with His resurrection, He crushed the serpent's head—defeating Satan, conquering death, and securing salvation for all who trust in Him. The war was not won at the cradle, but the

cradle was the opening move of God's decisive invasion. This is why Christmas is like spiritual D-Day: a bold strike deep behind enemy lines that guarantees the final victory.

Revelation 12 celebrates that victory. Listen to the heavenly announcement in verses 10–11

**10** Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: *"Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah."*

*For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.*

**11** They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb

Revelation 12 isn't just dramatic imagery—it's the entire Bible's storyline condensed into a single vision:

The promise in the garden.

Preserved through Israel.

Born through Mary.

Fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Carried on in His church.

The Adversary Satan who wars against it all, but will be vanquished

When the King returns to rule with ultimate Christmas peace on Earth.

This is the cosmic Christmas story—and the hope it announces is as real today as it was in Bethlehem.

There are two critical takeaways for us this advent that starts today and will be reinforced over the next two weeks. #1 Everyone needs to go on Amazon and order a 7 headed, red dragon to add to your nativity set. JK...

### **#1 Wake up to the Spiritual War.**

A few months ago, researchers exploring one of the most remote parts of the Southern Ocean made a discovery that stunned the scientific world. It was a type of deep sea sponge. Now if you hear the word "sponge," you probably picture something soft, passive, harmless — More like this guy- **Sponge Bob.**

They found what they're calling the **death-ball sponge**. This one breaks all the categories because it's a sponge that hunts its prey in the inky depths of the ocean. We've lived our entire lives on this planet, literally thousands of years of human existence without even knowing there is a sponge of death at war with other deep sea creatures. Just because we couldn't see it didn't mean it wasn't there. It was always lurking in the darkness — hidden from view, but very real.

When I read that I thought: Most people live their lives on the surface — the visible world, the things we can touch and measure. We often assume if I can't see it, it's not real.. And so many people dismiss stories like this as vestiges from ancient, superstitious people. Others, even

many Christians never go below the surface, not wanting to take their snorkel gear off and put on the scuba gear to go down into the depths to see the realities of this war going on around us. Maybe out of distraction, fear, or comfort.

But Scripture reminds us that just beneath what we can see is a spiritual world that is just as real — a world of powerful beings, of conflict, danger, of good and evil. And earth, and humanity in particular, is the prime battle ground.

Do you believe there is a spiritual war still going on today? In our lives, our communities, in our world? Do you know that you and I are caught up in this war?

There have been many times when Shannan and I are just locked in a conflict, and it seems so disillusioning, how did we get here? And then we realize, this is spiritual warfare going on here. We need to pray. Friends, the problems in your marriage are not just that she speaks pink and I speak blue- there's a spiritual battle and the enemy hates your marriage.

Why is it that shame won't let go even after you've repented? Because the enemy hates freedom.

Why is it that you continue to hide in isolation even though you know and we've preached over and over that we all need real community in our lives? Because the enemy hates what we have going on here.

Why is it that the loudest cultural voices and our glowing screens often disciple us more than God's Word? Because the enemy hates the truth and he doesn't want you to get serious about studying his Word.

We are in a war and we are not spectators. C.S. Lewis- "There is no neutral ground in the universe. Every square inch, every split second is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan."

Which means we must not only wake up to the spiritual war, but choose a side. How can you be sure you are on the side of Jesus?

We are all born into a battlefield already in progress. And Scripture says we don't enter it neutral. *Galatians 4:3 We were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world.*

*Ephesians 2:1-3 You were dead in your trespasses and sins... following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air...*

But God in his mercy provides a way for us to switch sides.

***Galatians 4: 4 But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,***

***5 to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.***

**John 1:12** Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God

**Colossians 1:13** He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves.

Have you joined his team in this war?

## **#2 Take Heart, the War is already Won!**

One of my favorite reformation hymns was written by Martin Luther, A Mighty Fortress is our God- there's a third stanza in it. It goes like this.

*And though this world, with devils filled,  
Should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed  
His truth to triumph through us.*

*The prince of darkness grim—  
We tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure,  
For lo! his doom is sure;  
One little word shall fell him.*

This is the promise of the hymn, this is the promise of Revelation 12, and it's the promise of Christmas.

**Take heart when you feel overwhelmed by evil in the world.** Violence, corruption, cultural decay, wars, injustice—many feel like darkness is winning. **Revelation 12:12** *the dragon rages because he knows his time is short.* He is loud, but he is losing. While evil may appear it is running the world and winning the war, trust that ultimate God is! The Lamb already sits on the throne.

**Take heart when you feel attacked spiritually.** Temptation. Accusation. Fear. Anxiety. Doubt. The enemy whispers: "You're losing. God has abandoned you." But **Revelation 12:10** *the accuser has been thrown down.* The cross has already silenced Satan's right to condemn you. If Satan can't devour the child, he can't devour the children of God. If Satan can defeat Christ, he can't defeat those who belong to Christ.

**Take heart when sin feels strong and old habits feel unbreakable.** Addictions. Destructive patterns. Shame cycles. People often think, "This is just who I am. I'll never change." **Revelation 12:11** *They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.* Victory over sin is not based on willpower but on a Savior who has already conquered. You're not fighting for victory—you're fighting from victory.

**Take heart when your faith puts you at odds with the world.** Some feel pressure at work, school, or socially to compromise. To cower at the loud voices that seem to have the world's ear. But Revelation 12 says: The Lamb wins. No earthly power has the last word, Christ does.

**Take heart when suffering feels endless.** Health issues. Grief. Depression. Chronic pain. Loss. You may be weary and say, "Will this ever get better?" But **Revelation 12:12** *Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them!* Your future will be defined not by tears and suffering, but by rejoicing. Revelation shows a future where: Every tear is wiped away. Pain is no more. Death is defeated.

So church, take heart. The war is real, but the victory is sure. The dragon may rage, but his time is short. And the reason for confidence has everything to do with what we remember at this communion table. The victory was won by the blood of the Lamb.

Communion is our reminder that Christ's body was broken, His blood was poured out, and through His sacrifice the accuser was cast down.