

# Conquering the Dragon (Part 2)

*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: 10 October 2021

Preacher: Bill Story

[ 0 : 00 ]     that place where we find him. Take out your Bibles with me, please, and turn to Revelation chapter 12. Revelation chapter 12.

We continue to look, and this is our third time in this chapter, it's all one piece. In fact, chapter 12 and chapter 13 are all one piece of this segment, but it's a little easier to break it down because there are scenes that this chapter breaks into.

So chapter 12 breaks into verses 1 through 6, which shows the battle between the woman and the dragon, actually the dragon trying to kill the offspring, the child of the woman, and failing, and then scene 2 then goes to heaven.

Verses 7 to 12 shows now another war, another battle as a result of the son having ruled with a rod of iron and then being caught up to God.

Now things change in heaven because Christ has taken his throne in heaven, and now we see in verse 7 that there's a war in heaven that breaks out as a result. Michael now takes charge.

[ 1 : 23 ]     He and his angels take war against the dragon and his angels, and the dragon is not strong enough, literally. And he is cast down to the earth.

Salvation is proclaimed, declared that the reason the dragon is cast down is because now Christ is ruling. Christ is on his throne.

The kingdom has come. And so Jesus begins to rule his kingdom from heaven on his throne. And so the dragon is thrown down.

No longer is a place to stand before God and accuse the brethren. Now that Christ sits on the throne, the brethren have been forgiven. The brethren have no condemnation.

So there's no place for the devil to accuse them. They're innocent. But now he comes to earth. This comes to our last section.

[ 2 : 21 ]     It's what we'll look at today. Verses 13 through 17. Now there's war on earth. Now that the devil has been kicked out of heaven before God, he now takes his vengeance and his anger and aims it at the woman and her offspring, which clearly is the church.

Okay. So this is where we come in. So I want to read the text. Then we'll ask the Lord to protect us as well as enlighten us.

And then we will dig in. So if you're able, please stand as I read Revelation chapter 12. I'm going to go ahead and read the whole thing. So we have once again, a reminder of the whole scene. Revelation 12, one.

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

She was pregnant and 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.

[ 3 : 33 ]     And on his head's 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 all the nations with a rod of iron. But her child was caught up to God and to his throne.

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

Now, war arose in heaven. Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back. But he, the dragon, was defeated.

And there was no longer a place for them, for the dragon and his angels in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down. That ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.

[ 4 : 48 ] He was thrown down to the earth. And his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come.

For the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who was accusing them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by their blood, by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony.

For they loved not their lives even unto death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them. But woe to you, O earth and sea.

For the devil has come down to you in great wrath. Because he knows that his time is short. And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued, hunted the woman who had given birth to the male child.

But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle. So that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness to the place where she is to be nourished.

[ 6 : 12 ] For a time and times and half a time. The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman to sweep her away with a flood.

But the earth came to the help of the woman. And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth.

Then the dragon became furious with the woman. And went off to make war on the rest of her offspring. On those who keep the commandments of God.

And those who hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.

Which leads to chapter 13. He's not done. Let us pray. Father, we thank you for your word. We pray, oh Father, that you would open our eyes to see the pictures, the truth that you are revealing.

[ 7 : 28 ] Help us to connect the dots. Help us to see how this magnificent power of God is ours.

How you defeat the dragon time and time again. And so grant us confidence. Grant us awareness.

Grant us faith, oh Father, in you. To resist him ourselves. And Father, I pray particularly today, this hour, that you would protect us.

That dragon, that serpent does not want this truth to come out. As a father, prevent him. God, bar him from our minds and our conscience.

For this hour, we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Please be seated. Amen. When I was a teenager, I had the privilege of knowing a man by the name of Reggie Coates.

[ 8 : 43 ] You remember Reggie. Reggie was a wonderful songwriter, a godly man. And this was a time when I was pursuing God, but was not yet changed.

But I knew the truth was the truth. And I did love the Bible. And Reggie had a way of putting the truth of the Bible into words. Into song. And so, one of those songs that I just thought is so powerful, I want to read for you today.

It's called Stand Firm and Be Strong. You can look this up and hear his powerful voice sing this song. It's called Stand Firm and Be Strong.

It goes like this. The past, it snickers with the voice of darkness, whispering memories of the evil you have done. It says, you will never change.

The habits of the past can't be undone. But what hope is left if you listen to the liar? He seeks to tear apart the promises of God.

[ 9 : 52 ] The cross means nothing if it wasn't meant for you and all you've done. And he sings, stand firm and be strong.

And the next verse, he goes into still temptation. Tries to cripple what's inside of you. Lust and jealousy and hate will try to bind you.

The war still rages on. And you must decide from right or wrong. But when you're feeling weak. And the pressure sneaks upon you.

Remember, sin cannot win with God inside you. Use the shield of faith. And the weapons of the spirit to see you through.

Stand firm and be strong. There's a great guitar going along with it. Then he transitions into this beautiful, God, he loves you.

[ 10 : 54 ] Lean on that love. God, he loves you. Lean on that love. And hold your head up high.

And don't let the darkness get inside. Hold your head up high. As you trust in Jesus, he will lift you higher.

Hold your head up high. And don't let the devil take you by surprise. Hold your head up high. As you walk in Jesus, he will make all things right.

Stand firm and be strong. You need to go to YouTube and listen to Reggie. What's his last name? Reggie Coates.

Thank you, did pretty good, brother. C-O-A-T-E-S. So I thought of that song this week as I was reflecting on last week and this week's sermon and the war conquering the dragon.

[ 12 : 11 ] Right? How it applies to us. Last Sunday, I was not feeling good. Something, well, but something else was off.

I found a difficult experience as I sat in that pew preparing to come up here. And then as I came up here, I was plagued by doubt.

And as I thought about that experience this last week, I realized I was being harassed.

I was in a battle. I was wrestling. But my mind was not alert. I was assaulted by deception, questioning my worthiness, and I am unworthy.

So I'm readily hearing that. Of course. Fiery darts coming of sins that I've committed.

[ 13 : 29 ] Fiery darts. Nagging fears. Disturbing my soul. And I have to confess.

I was caught off guard last Sunday. I allowed it to affect me instead of resisting. I just accepted it as my own unworthiness.

See, in spiritual warfare, we must be alert and sober. It's easy to say that, Navi.

Always easy to do that. Amen. Last week, I was not. I'm used to it. And it's not that I didn't pray. Not that I didn't prepare.

Kind of like, not that I'm anything like Peter. But I had confidence. And I have confidence every week.

[ 14 : 29 ] This is God's word, not mine. And I know he speaks through. But man, I was hounded last week.

So now I can't read. I blow it up so it's bigger for my old eyes to see.

So, Revelation 12. It's revealing to us the battle that we don't see. It's revealing to us what happened in that first century when God brought the Messiah into the world.

And the woman not only married the woman, but the bigger woman, the one that stretches all the way back to Eve, the woman Israel that had brought the seed from Eve to Sarah to Rebecca to on and on all the way through.

Through Ruth, right? Through Hagar. Through all these different women tell Mary. And Mary carried the physical seed.

[ 15 : 43 ] Right? Not Joseph. Mary carried the physical seed. Mary was physically descended from David. And so, it's that woman that is attacked.

Right? So he starts in the first century here. We see that in chapter 12. So we're seeing that behind that whole scene, the killing of the infants by Herod.

That was the dragon. Trying to kill the child born Jesus. All the attacks on Jesus' life, the attempted stonings, the attempted throwing him off the cliff.

All of those were satanic attacks. That's what this text is telling us. This is, what's behind all that is the dragon. We saw Herod, or we saw the Nazarenes, or we saw the Jews who want to stone him.

And behind all of that is the dragon. That's what this text is telling us. There's something unseen going on behind the scenes. So it is today. And Jesus' resurrection and ascension and sitting on His throne changed everything about the war.

[ 17 : 04 ] Now the war is waged on earth. We deal with spirits who are in the heavenlies, understand, as another dimension. Not up in heaven, but in the heavenlies.

They're not before God anymore. In that third heaven. But now He is on earth and He is angry. And He knows His time is short.

And Jesus sitting on the throne has changed everything. And it's intensified the attack on believers. So we see how the devil works and how Jesus defends His saints.

And that's what I want to encourage you with today. Before we get to that, I want you to first note that we're again given a time indicator, a time signal for these conflicts of the church age.

What do we make of these different time references? Now we saw back in chapter 11, verse 2, that there was 42 months, right? That the holy city would be trampled for 42 months.

[ 18 : 10 ] 42 months. Basically three and a half years. Okay? And then we saw in... Then we will see in the next chapter, 42 months is the same time that is given to the first beast to have authority to attack the saints.

42 months. Again, three and a half years. So is that literally three and a half years? I don't know. I'm not sure. And then in chapter 11, 3, we saw a different time reference.

We had 42 months. Now we have 1260 days, which essentially is three and a half years, if that's what that means. But what's with the 42 months, the 1260 days? They're borrowing from Daniel, partly.

But it's the period in 11, 3, it's the period that the two witnesses are invincible. Right? These two witnesses we read about in chapter 11, they're invincible until their time is done.

First 1260 days, they're invincible. And then they're killed by the dragon. And then three days later, or three and a half, they don't rise as quickly as Jesus.

[ 19 : 17 ] Jesus raises after three days. But after three and a half days, they raise and go to heaven. So like, wow, that's kind of... So that's 1260 days. And then that is the same time we saw in chapter 12, verse 6.

We just read in verse 6 that the woman goes into the wilderness to be nourished by God in a place prepared by God. 1260 days. Again, roughly three and a half years. Is that what that means?

When is that 1260 days? When's that 42 months? Is that far distant? Is that the very end? That's what a lot of folks think. Now we're given a new clue in verse 14 of this chapter.

He says, now, referring again to the woman going to the desert. The woman, verse 14, the woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, eagle, eagle, eagle, so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness to the place where she is to be nourished for, now we expect, 42 minutes or 1260 days.

But instead we're given a time and times and a half a time. So three and a half times. So three and a half years, right? It's got to be three and a half years. It's got to be what that means. That's what everybody says it means.

[ 20 : 30 ] That's what I was told growing up. And then I looked at the word. Man, when you look at the word, it might change things.

It's the same word we have in Daniel. Now, of course, Daniel, it's in Greek. I mean, it's in Hebrew and in Revelation, it's in Greek, but the meaning behind the words is the same.

Daniel 7.25, where the beast, the fourth beast, right? So Daniel, you know, a lot of Revelation sounds like Daniel. You've got a beast that's warring on the saints, right?

For a time, times and a half a time. Okay? It's the same phrase. And then again, in Daniel 12.7, same phrase. Time, times and a half a time. It's a significant word for time because it's not time like we think of time.

It's not the word *chronos* where we get our words chronology, right? We think of sequential time, a chronology of events.

[ 21 : 40 ] So *chronos*, that's what we think of time. You know, days and hours and years, you know, go by. They're sequential and they're ordered and there's a duration. It's all set.

This word is different. This word is *kairos*, which means season. Season. How long is the season? Right?

Depends on where you live. Depends on, you know, what kind of season you're talking about. So that's what this term is in verse 14. She goes to the wilderness to be nourished by God for a season.

And a couple seasons. And another half season. How long is that? I don't know. God's seasons are different than ours.

I had a season that was 12 years in depression. How long is your season? You might be beating that.

[ 22 : 47 ] You might be sure that you might have a whole different kind of season. Seasons. Jesus talks about seasons all the time. You plant. You water. Wait for it to grow.

There's a time of planting. There's a time of reaping. Jesus says, you're like, I'm the vine and you're the branches. And you know what? When you bear fruit, you know what happens next? Yeah, you have a fruitful season.

But what happens after fruit season? My father. He comes in. Oh, you didn't bear really good fruit. We're going to do some cutting.

There's season of pruning. How long is that? If you're a regular literal vine, it might just be for a day you're going to have to take a while to recover before you ever bear fruit again.

So Jesus uses that season. How long is it? So I'm just saying this *kairos* term, this word for time is not like we think.

[ 23 : 51 ] It's God's appointed time. It's an undefined season. It's an indefinite time span. seasons in the Bible can be 40 days.

Jesus went into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil for 40 days. Israel was in the wilderness for how long? 40 years. The time between the promise to Abraham and the fulfillment in Exodus was how long?

400 years. See how long seasons can be? They got a season. A couple more seasons.

Is there a gap between the... And then a half season? We'll cut it down a little bit. See what I'm saying? We got to think biblically.

And if this is indefinite, it makes you wonder what about the 42 months in the 1260 days? Are we not to take those literal? Are those just kind of...

[ 25 : 02 ] You know, because Peter says a day with the Lord is like a thousand years. So, 1260 days, that's a long time.

Not that we... That's our judgment. Understand. God's timing is not our timing. We want... We want to...

define time. Lord, I want to know how long this temptation is going to go on. I got other things to do. I want to know when this is over.

Okay? And he says, dude, it's going to be a while now. Look at that attitude. That's what he says to me.

Anyways, that's what I'm getting. It's like, come on. Where's that humbling under my mighty hand part? Come on. Trust me. Okay? So, that's the first thing I want you to notice.

[ 26 : 01 ] So, that kind of opens things up a bit for me. So, I think what we're talking about, this 1260, 42 months, time, times, and a half a time, is the whole church age.

That's what I think. Because here again, in chapter 12, we start with the birth of Jesus. And verse 17, we're with the whole church being attacked.

Not just the early church, but now the offspring of the church. So, it's going on and on and on. I think it's a way of just saying, God will let you know when it's over.

And maybe use the word seasons because it, maybe it kind of goes in, throughout church age, it goes through times of big pressure on the church, and then movement of the church, and then another pressure on the church.

Okay? So, this is our battle. What he's talking about here in verse 13 through 17, this is our battle.

[ 27 : 06 ] We are conquerors in the dragon war. And what I want you to see today is that Jesus protects us in a couple of different ways. And actually, it's kind of surprising ways.

So, first we see in verses 13 and 14 as the dragon goes after the woman. First defense is a place. A place that he's prepared. A place that he gives her wings to fly to.

To go be safe and be in a refuge. So, one defense is a place we go in the midst of the storm. And then the other defense, a little more ambiguous, verses 15 to 17, where we have, okay, he's thwarted, the dragon's thwarted once again.

You know, he's going after the woman and he can't get her because she's protected. Now, he goes after the woman again and he sends a flood, right? And an interesting defense happens for the woman.

It says that the earth helps. The picture is a physical flood coming, right? And we're thinking Old Testament Korah's Rebellion, right? Where the earth opened up and swallowed all the rebels, right?

[ 28 : 22 ] So, some kind of physical. Remember, those Old Testament pictures are paradigms for the New Testament application. It's not physical in the New Testament. It's picking from those, drawing from those Exodus and wilderness images.

So, here, this is a different kind of flood and the earth, probably not the land, earth, but the people of earth opened their mouth and swallowed the flood and in that way, the church is protected.

It was meant for the church, it was meant for the woman, but it gets absorbed. by the world. And so, by the time it gets to the church, it's not a flood.

Does that make sense? Let me see if I can explain it. So, two kinds of defenses. I don't know if you can call that a defense or a diversion. So, defense number one.

Fortification number one. Barrier number one. In this battle, Jesus brings us to a place of nourishment. When the dragon comes for the woman who is the church, God has prepared place and He gives us, He provides for us a way to get there.

[ 29 : 46 ] Okay, Jesus brings us to a place of nourishing in the test, in the battle. Okay? So, I want you to see three things. First of all, see the persecution, verse 13.

See the protection of God, beginning of verse 14, and then finally, at the end of verse 14, the place of protection. So, persecution, verse 13, says, when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, when did that happen?

After the war in heaven, after the sun, after the, right, the child goes up to his throne. Right? So, he's thrown down. When he saw that, so when is that? When is that?

That's after Jesus ascended. Right? So, when did Jesus ascend in the Bible? What chapter? Acts chapter 1.

Acts chapter 1. Jesus, right, stayed 40 days, right? Wait for the Pentecost, wait 10 more days for Pentecost. Right? He goes up, wait for the coming of the Spirit.

[ 30 : 53 ] Church is born at Pentecost. Apostles go out, start spreading the word. That's when the dragon attacks the church. Which is, at that point, the apostles, the disciples, all the people we read about in the book of Acts.

Okay? That's, that's attack number one. Okay? So he gives, he sends an attack. He pursues the woman. Literally, he hunts the woman.

He's the predator, she's the prey. He intensifies his efforts. He pursues the woman.

Now remember, back in the first six verses, he stood before the woman, he wasn't hunting the woman, what was he hunting? The child of the woman.

He wanted to kill the child. He didn't care about the woman. He just wanted the child of the woman. He wanted the Messiah. He wanted to take him out. Right? Thwarted. Now, he gets thrown down to earth, missed out on the sun, struck out, strike number one.

[ 32 : 00 ] Okay? Now he's thrown to earth. Okay, I'll take out my anger on the woman. The woman that gave birth, that is Israel, who becomes the new church.

Right? Jesus combines Jew and Gentile. So that's the woman. Okay? And then by verse 17, he's going to get thwarted against the woman.

So now he's going to take out his anger on her offspring. Right? Her first offspring was the son, the child, the Messiah. He made a whole new community.

He goes after the early church. And then who's after the early church? Well, everyone who was born through the church. Right? Through the teaching of the apostles.

Every believer the rest of time. So verse 17 is going from first century on. Okay? And we'll get to the very end at the end of chapter 14.

[ 33 : 00 ] Chapter 12 and 13 is about this battle. So, um, against this new church to devour her. So I want you to notice God's protection. It's surprising. In verse 14, the woman is given two wings.

Cool. Two wings of a great angel. I'd like those. And he's not talking about, um, Red Bull.

Gives you wings. Notice she's given the wings. So in other words, she doesn't take them. She doesn't have them.

She's given that ability to fly away. God is providing a way of escape. God is providing a way from the storm.

He gives the ability to fly to him. Jesus is giving us, is bringing us to a place of nourishment. So he's given her two wings.

[ 33 : 59 ] Why? So that she might fly into the wilderness to the place. Okay? She's given the wings so that she might go to the wilderness.

Remember what the wilderness is? We looked at this two weeks ago. Verse 6, the wilderness. Right? The woman went to the wilderness there after the birth of Christ. The woman went to the, to the wilderness.

What's the wilderness in the Bible? How does God use wilderness? He uses it all the time, right? Jesus went to the wilderness, it was led to the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Israel went through the wilderness 40 years, right?

To be what? To be tempted. To be tested. To be humbled. Remember we read from Deuteronomy 8 after it was all over.

God said, this is what I was doing by the way. You didn't figure it out. I put you in the wilderness to humble you. To test what was in your heart.

[ 34 : 58 ] To see if you would really trust me. All that time your shoes didn't wear out. You always had water. You always had bread provided for you. Right? And I tested you.

And you learn to deal with, it's interesting because Deuteronomy 8 mentions these two words. You learn to deal with serpents. serpents. And scorpions. Why does he pick out those?

Well, those come up again in Revelation, don't they? Serpents and scorpions. Those are instruments of the devil or pictures of the devil. You learn to trust me.

You learn that you don't live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. You learn in the wilderness. You get tested.

You get humbled. It's not all fun. But you learn. You learn what real food is. You learn what real drink is. You learn what really matters in the wilderness.

[ 35 : 58 ] And Jesus himself was led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. But remember, when we read that text, he's led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

But 40 days go by first. And after 40 days, then the devil came because then that's when Jesus was hungry.

Hungry. He hadn't eaten for 40 days. Turn the stones into bread, man. It's easy. You're the man. No. And he quotes from Deuteronomy 8.

Man should not live by bread alone. But by everyone, you know, that was... Take that, devil. That was his defense. Yeah. Word of God. Power. Throw yourself off the temple.

Oh, you want to use Scripture? Throw yourself off the temple. Off the temple. God says in the Psalms, He'll protect you. Jesus says, misquoting a Scripture, thank you very much. You shall not test the Lord your God.

[ 36 : 58 ] More important, test. And then the devil says, hey, see all these kingdoms of the world? They're mine. I'm God of this world.

I'm ruler of this age. If you bow down to me, I'll give them to you. Now, you think, you know, Jesus thinking, dude, they're mine.

But not at that moment and not in this human flesh. It had to be a real temptation to Jesus to skip what was ahead and take them. So, that's wilderness.



See, wilderness is both refuge and battle. Okay? But notice, Jesus had 40 days with the Lord before the tempting.

And then remember in Matthew 4 he describes the temptation in the wilderness of Jesus. Remember that after the 40 days, he's tempted. One, two, three. Be gone, Satan. Gone. And then what happened? Remember what happened? Angels came.

[ 38 : 12 ] Ministered to him. Ooh, more refuge. More refreshment. See, the wilderness, see, I would like the wilderness just to be kind of a nice little oasis and, you know, just go take a nap.

Well, it's that, yes. There's some of that. Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden. I'll give you rest, not physical rest.

I'll give you rest for your soul, you know, the one that's just always going at it. Just calm down. I'll give you that rest. Right?

So that's the protection. Where we learn faith. The two wings. What are the two wings? Well, what do they refer to?

Well, they're a reference back to Egypt again. They're a reference back to the Exodus. We're seeing here in Revelation a lot of references back to the Exodus. To the plagues, right?

[ 39 : 15 ] Like in Exodus and to the experiences, the sufferings. So here's another reference back to Exodus. Exodus chapter 19. After he brought them out of Egypt and through the Red Sea, they're standing before Sinai.

And God says to them, you yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians. I humiliated them and I beat them. I defeated them and ultimately drowned them.

And, let me put it in different terms, how I bore you on eagle's wings to bring you to my cell. See, that whole experience of Egypt and coming out of slavery, all the plagues and all the testings and all that and then coming through the Red Sea, that was all burying you on eagle's wings.

Man, I don't remember any wings. There were a lot of dirt, sand. And we're not talking literal. I bore you on my, I bore you, I carry you.

how do you think the water's parted? Where do you think the water came from? Where's that bread? What's that? Manu, manu, where's that coming from?

[ 40 : 28 ] What's that? That's what it literally is. Manu, manu. What is it? What is it? I bore you on eagles.

So it's a picture, in other words, of God's provision, God's protection, God's power. He gives us by these wings, He gives us wings, not literal ones, but the ability, the enablement to fly to Him.

To fly to Him. As Jesus says, come to me. He's opened the door. He's given us access. Okay? To a place.

To a place. Literally, the text reads, to her place. It's the same one back in verse 6 that God had prepared. It's a place that God had prepared to nurture. Well, same words again.

We're talking about the same thing. Verse 6 and verse 14 talk about the same thing. Verse 6, it was for 1260 days. Now in verse 14, it's for a time, times and half a time.

[ 41 : 36 ] So, same thing, apparently. Because, it's both wilderness, it's both a place, it's both nourishing. Sounds the same to me.

Could be wrong. I don't think so. Not because, sorry. That way you're supposed to laugh at that. But anyway. To the place where God nourishes her.

He nourishes. He feeds her. He nurtures her. He teaches her. He prepares her. He helps her learn to trust Him. For three and a half seasons.

It's where the church always goes when she's in battle. It's the stream in the desert. It's the oasis in the wilderness.

It's the refuge in the battle. So in the battle, Jesus brings us to a place of nourishing.

[ 42 : 40 ] Do you know that place? Do you know that place? Have you gone there? You can go there any time you want. Hebrews 4 calls it Sabbath. Sabbath. Every day's our Sabbath by the way.

Whatever day you hear His voice, that's the Sabbath. Hebrews 4 says. You don't have to wait. Go. Alright, second. Defense or barrier or shield, whatever you want to call this.

This protection that God provides through the earth to catch the flood or stem the flood so the church is not overwhelmed.

Here's the defense. right, the serpent sends a flood out of his mouth to devour and destroy the church.

To flood away the women. So, let me put it this way. The devil's deception, the flood of deception, that's what comes out of his mouth.

[ 43 : 44 ] His deception. His flood of deception is swallowed not by believers but by unbelievers. Not by the heavenly but by the earthly.

See? So, does that mean that believers are never touched or tempted by false teaching? By deception? No, it doesn't.

Yeah. But we're not flooded by it. And, like me last week, we can be distracted. Okay?

We can kind of start think about it for a while. Kind of, yeah, poor me, bad me, or shame on me, whatever, however that goes. but I didn't stay there.

Because, why? Because, not because of me, because the spirit said, come on boy, you know what happened there? So, so, yeah, we can be distracted for a while.

[ 44 : 50 ] Believers can, yeah, we can be tempted by it. We can, we can start to buy into it and say, oh, that sounds kind of good. But, overall, no, we won't buy into it.

Not true believers. Not if you have the Holy Spirit. See, the serpent's flood, the source of the serpent's flood is out of his mouth.

Says it twice, verse 15. Right? The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman to sweep her away with a flood.

Verse 16. But the earth came up to help the woman and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon poured from his mouth. So, what comes from the mouth of the serpent?

Right? What does that mean? Well, it's clearly symbolic. Clearly symbolic. A serpent doesn't spew a flood of water. Right?

[ 45 : 51 ] That's a picture we're given to feel the, whoa, okay, flash, fly, boom, danger. I'm going to be wiped away. So he sends that toward the church, but it gets diverted.

Or it gets absorbed. How do you want to say this? Right? So, from his mouth comes deception. Genesis 3. Has the Lord really said you shall not eat from any tree of the garden?

That's how he starts. right? Get you thinking the Lord. Get you doubting God's word. Deception. Lies. What is the only weapon that the devil has against believers?

can he control your mind? Can you be demon possessed? Nope. Nope. You can be demonized, not possessed.

You can be harassed, cannot be possessed. That's English language that the Greek never has possessed. It just always says demonized. Different levels of that.

[ 46 : 55 ] If you have the Holy Spirit in you, he cannot replace the Holy Spirit. Okay? That's what I'm talking about. If you don't have the Holy Spirit, if you're, remember Jesus talking about that parable about you clean out the heart, right?

Get the demon out, and then what? It's all nice and clean and reformed. And then what? Seven more come in. Because you haven't put the Holy Spirit in there. Not that you can put that in there, but that's what you need.

Greater is he who is in you than he was in the world. Okay? I trust that. He cannot control you, but he can deceive you.

He can lie to you. He can accuse you. He can slander you. He can get you for a while here in his lives. David had the Holy Spirit.

What happened to him? Why don't you stay home from the war for a while? Oh, why don't you go up to the balcony? You know Bathsheba's out there.

[ 47 : 59 ] David probably knew that. Sure, I can just look at, you know, it won't be a problem. So, the only weapon that the evil one has against a believer is deception and lie from his mouth.

Cannot read your mind. He is not omniscient. He is not God. He is a powerful spiritual being. He never gets tired.

He is relentless. But he's not going to overpower the Holy Spirit. Not even close. But you are subject to testing and temptation.

You are vulnerable. He can ultimately create your death. Right? He talks about the dragon killing the witnesses. Yeah, he can ultimately, yeah.

When the 42 months is up. When God says. Okay. So, that's, so he throws the fiery dart.

[ 49 : 19 ] That's his weapon against us. That's what I experienced last week. He throws deception, lies, fiery darts that say to you, God's left you.

Or God's disappointed in you. God's bad at you. Here, buy that one. It's impossible for God to be disappointed in you, by the way. God does feel things against you.

He mourns. He doesn't, he's not angry. You're unworthy. You're a failure. You will never change.

You're still committing that sin. What do you, you know, come on. Fiery darts. So, what is the defense? Here's the surprise help in verse 16.

The earth. The earth came to the help of the woman. And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth.

[ 50 : 18 ] So, the earth, when it says the earth, he's not talking about the land. He's not talking about a physical thing. Not talking about, Old Testament Korah's rebellion where the earth actually opened up and the guys went into the earth.

No, the earth. Not the land, but the people of the land. The earth dwellers. In fact, that's kind of a technical term in Revelation. Those who dwell upon the earth.

The earth dwellers. Those people that are just earthly. The people that have nothing to do with God. The earth dwellers. That's all they got. Earth. So, the earth comes up to help them.

Jesus used the same metaphor, remember? He said, about the earth. He said, you, disciples, are the light of the world.

Right? So, does that mean you're physically the shining beam for the whole sphere? No. World, he's talking about the world of unbelievers.

[ 51 : 14 ] you're the salt of the earth. So, am I literally salt to the land? To the ground? No, we don't understand it that way. We readily understand it's a metaphor of, no, you're the salt of the earth.

Like salt to the ground, you are salt to people. So, Jesus used the word earth as a metaphor of people. And so, that's how he's using it here.

The earth, not the land, the ground, but the people, the earthly people, rise up and help the woman. Not intentionally, they just do it because, you know.

Ooh. Ooh, look at that. Oh, please. They open their mouths and they swallow the deceit that comes from the mouth of the serpent.

They eat up his lies. I mean, we see it everywhere. Don't we? They eat up his lies. They feast because they think it's right and good.

[ 52 : 17 ] It makes sense to them. They can lean on their own understanding that way. They can have it their way. They can believe that, oh, I don't believe in that kind of God.

Why? Because, you know, because I want to define how God should be. He should be gracious toward me and mean toward others. Right?

Just like being on the bus. Mr. Bill, would you stop Jimmy from nagging me? Well, Tommy, it's not fair.

Oh, Tommy, you want fairness? Think about that, Tommy. Do you want fairness? Because that means you get what you deserve too. Yeah, second thought, Mr. Bill, I think we're good.

I mean, what kind of God do you want? I want a God that's fair, but not to me. I want him to grade me on a curve.

[ 53 : 26 ] Really big curve. But the people I hate, I don't want him to grade him with a curve. Because they deserve it. Where's that come from?

That doesn't come from God. That comes from the snake in the garden. Not the snake, sorry, the dragon in the garden who started getting Eve thinking, yeah, wait a minute.

Is God holding something back? Did God really say, can you trust what God says? You probably need to spin that a little bit and reinterpret that.

You know, that's God's truth. What's yours? See, that's where we go. We're all subject to that. So, the earth becomes kind of, they take the flood, they take the brunt of it, the earth dwellers take the brunt of it, they swallow up the lies and the teaching.

But the Christians, see, we're on the hill. So, the flood, flash flood comes down, the earth swallows it up and maybe, maybe this is the picture that the church is above that a little bit.

[ 54 : 38 ] We may get some splash, we may get some, you know, we may get some leftover but we don't get the intense flood. That's what I'm picturing here.

I might be wrong on that. That's what I'm picturing is that, because he's saying the earth is helping the woman. He's helped, the earth is helping.

They're taking the brunt of it. And so, in a sense, that's a defense for us. And where we might get hit by false teaching, we might buy into it for a while, we might get distracted for a while, we won't be overwhelmed by it.

What did Jesus say about the flood? the end of Matthew, the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7. What's he say? Whoever hears these words of mine and acts upon them, applies them, hears and applies.

He's like the man who built his house on a rock. And what happened to that house? Well, the storms came, floods came, floods came, beat against that house.

[ 55 : 45 ] But it did not fall. Why? Because it was founded on the rock. My words. He who hears my words but does not act upon them, he's like the fool that built a house on the sand.

And the same storms come and the rains come and all that, beat against the house and great was its fall. Why? Because it was not founded on my word. So you'll still experience storms.

Right? You'll still experience the battle. But if you're founded on the word of Jesus, if you're not just hearing it but acting on it, you'll withstand.

That's what he's getting at. So verse 17 kind of summarizes everything. There's a sustained war. So again, notice he attacks the child of the woman.

He fails. Then he attacks the woman fails. Now he will turn his anger, verse 17, to her offspring. The dragon became furious with the woman.

[ 56 : 47 ] He couldn't get her. He couldn't get the flood to overwhelm her. Didn't work. And so he went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on the rest of her seed, the rest of her children, who are the children of the woman.

Well, he defines them. They are those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. These are Christian people. It's not just Israel now.

Now it's Israel slash Gentile in one body. A new community that Jesus had created. So the change in prey. This is an ongoing war throughout time.

The devil couldn't stop the early church. Now he seeks to devour the rest of her children. So that's it. The most serious threat to the church.

Interesting, if you took a poll of Christians, I wonder what they would say. What's the most serious threat to the church? What is the most serious threat to the church?

[ 57 : 53 ] Deception. You're looking ahead. No, you're exactly right. Amen. It is deception. Do you remember when we looked at the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3?

And we kind of made a little chart. We kind of said, here's who Jesus is. Here's what he likes about the church. Here's what he wants to correct about the church. Right? Remember that? We kind of did that. And you could kind of look at, okay, what are the things that he corrects?

What are the things that he confronts? What are the things that bother Jesus about churches? What concerns him most? Had nothing to do with programs. How many people were there?

It had to do with teaching and faithfulness. That's it. You've left your first love. Oh, you tolerate the teaching of Jezebel.

Oh, you tolerate the teaching of Nebuchadnezzar. Nicolaitans. Or Balaam. Teaching. Teaching. Teaching. The most serious threat to the church is a flood of false teaching.

[ 59 : 06 ] It was happening in the early church. The seven churches there. Remember that a couple of times he mentions the synagogue of Satan. Remember in one of the churches he says, you live, I know where you dwell.

You dwell where Satan's throne is. Talk about being thrown down to earth. Satan sets up his throne at that time in one of the churches, in one of the cities of the church. And in each city is a synagogue of Satan, which means what?

Means there's a Jewish synagogue there, but they're not real Jews. They're not true Jews. They're Jewish, but they're not Christian. They're Jewish, but they've rejected the Messiah.

So they're a synagogue of Satan. There are churches of Satan. I don't mean those that are just called themselves churches of Satan. There are those.

It's like, yeah, okay. No, there are those that call themselves churches of Jesus Christ who are churches of Satan. Okay? The most serious threat to the church is the flood of false teaching.

[ 60 : 15 ] Paul says to Timothy, now the Spirit explicitly says that in later times, seasons, in later times, some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons.

Through the insincerity of liars, his conscience are seared. There are people that will come into the church and seduce other people away from the faith.

Jesus said that would happen. Paul said it to the Ephesian elders. There will be some from among you. From among those elders on that beach that day, Paul said, there's going to be some of you who will rise up and seek to, and are wolves in sheep's clothing.

We've seen them before here. We'll see them again. They'll expose themselves.

And this is the sign of the times. It's critical that we understand what the battle we're in is for the truth. Paul again says to Timothy, I charge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead and by his appearing and his kingdom preach the word.

[ 61 : 42 ] Be ready in season and out of season. Interesting seasons there. Be ready in season when it's all fruitful and it's going good.

and keep being ready out of season when, you know, pruning and dryness and not a lot of growth and in fact, doesn't look as good.

No leaves. Be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, and exhort with complete patience and teaching.

Why? For the time the season is coming when people will not endure sound teaching. That ever happen?

People will not endure sound teaching? The most basic thing the sound teaching? Why? Because they have itching ears and they will accumulate for themselves teachers.

[ 62 : 48 ] We're going to look elsewhere. We're going to find teachers that say what we want to hear. We'll find them. It's easier to find them today than any time. We'll find them to suit their own passions so I can do what I want to do and we'll turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths, fables, narratives.

You heard that word lately? That's what this word myth means. A narrative. Well our narrative is your fable.

See the time is coming, the season is coming when some some some will turn from the truth and they will gather teachers that scratch where they itch so that they could focus on themselves and they could stroke their self-esteem.

They could build up their self-trust. They just got to look within and find my truth. There are new teachers that say what they want to hear who make them comfortable, who help them to lean on their own understanding instead of trying to dig in and understand what God's wisdom is.

So what do we do? What should we do? People are leaving. Look. We used to be full.

[ 64 : 17 ] I know COVID happened. We're kind of getting past that, aren't we? Where's everybody? And by everybody, I'm not. You're everybody.

You're everybody now. I mean, where's the other ones? Where'd they go? Where'd they go?

I'm not talking about people that have real health issues and stuff where they should. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about people that could be here. If it mattered.

I don't want us to get thinking about those people. I'm just saying, what's happening? who brought COVID? I don't want to hear a political answer.

Yeah. It's like when God said to Job, or no, said to the devil, right? Devil comes before God in the book of Job. and says, by the way, who started the conversation, right?

[ 65 : 28 ] God said to the devil, have you seen my boy Job? Yeah. Yeah, you're protecting him. And if you weren't protecting him, he would curse you.

Accusation. God says, all right, go again. scene two, after Job is devastated but would not curse God.

Well, you're still protecting his health. All right, go. Poor Job. God started it. God doesn't allow.

God intends. God is sovereign. He is an active God. You don't have to protect him. So, God wouldn't do that.

God is God. We may not understand because he sees way. Why should Joseph suffer like that? Well, took Joseph a long time to figure that out.

[ 66 : 41 ] But he finally got it. Oh, yeah. You intended it for evil, but God intended my suffering. for good. I may not see that for a while.

He intended COVID. And he probably said to Satan, hey, have you seen the church around the world?

I don't know. Is that how it happened? Well, they haven't had a pest on us lately. All right, God. I don't know.

I do know God's in control. I do know God's sovereign. And I do know the devil is doing whatever evil and harm he can do. Amen. So if he worked through, oh, we're going to find out in the book of Revelation.

Guess who he works through? Guess who these beasts are in Revelation? They're governments. Okay? Okay? Okay? Okay? Okay?

[ 67 : 42 ] The ones Jesus said submit to. God, really?

God, we've got all kinds of reasons not to submit to this government. Yes, Lord. If you had to submit to Caesar, who am I talking about?

Ah, then my government doesn't even compare with Rome. Not yet. Not yet. Getting there. Working on it.

That's because you know who's working on them. All right. I went off page. Sorry.

But I did pray that God would restrain my word, so hopefully he... Oh, I'm done. I'm done.

[ 68 : 42 ] I'm done. I'm done. Stand firm and be strong. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. He will flee from you.

You believe that? Stand firm, resist, speak the word. Okay? Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word.

We thank you that you give us a place to go to to find refuge and nurture. nurture and we know, Father, there we accept it, that that wilderness both gives us nurture, but it also humbles us and teaches us and helps us learn to live by faith.

But we thank you for that place because it's a refuge so many times from the face of the dragon, from the intensity of the battle. God, we thank you, Father, that you've arranged things so that your church is not overwhelmed by the dragon.

We thank you that you have barriers and surprise help out there that we don't even know about. We thank you. Help us to stand firm.

[ 69 : 52 ] Help us to trust your promises, to use our shield of faith and the weapons of the Spirit to stand firm.

We thank you in Christ's name. Amen.