

The Deeper Conflict in Spiritual Battle

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Preacher: Bill Story

- [0 : 0 0] Thank you, Lord, and brothers and sisters. Turn with me to the book of Revelation, halfway through.
- Chapter 12. Right in the very middle, which is an appropriate place to go all the way back to the beginning, which is what the Revelation does.
- It's going to now give us a scope of vision, an unveiling of spiritual warfare that began in the Garden of Eden and continues to this day and will continue until Christ returns.
- This is how big the book of Revelation is. It's the whole story. This is not the second half of the story.
- This is not the end of the story. This is the whole story from beginning to end. And so once again, once again, we just sang once again.
- [1 : 0 9] Once again, we see not only praise, but once again, we see another curtain drawn back, another peeling of the onion, so to speak, another unveiling of what's really going on that we don't see with our eyes.
- Okay, so we're going to look at Revelation chapter 12, verses 1 to 6. I'd like to read the whole chapter because it really 12 and 13 all go together.
- But I want you to see the impact or feel the impact of chapter 12. We're just going to try to knock off the first section of it this morning.
- So if you're able, please stand as I read from Revelation chapter 12. Remember, we ended chapter 11.
- And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and heavy hail.
- [2 : 1 6] 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 was crying out in birth pains and in 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 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 has a place prepared by God in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.
- [3 : 4 2] Now, war arose in heaven. Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back.
- But he was defeated. And there was no longer any place for them 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.

He was thrown down to the earth. And his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a great 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 accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony.

For they love 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 his time is short.

[5 : 08] And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued 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 for a time, and times, and half a time.

The serpent poured out water like a river out of his mouth after the women to sweep her away with a flood. But the earth came to the help of the women, 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 women and went to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

And he stood on the sand of the sea. So reads Revelation 12. Let us pray. Father, grant us insight today.

[6 : 24] Grant us ears to hear and eyes to see, to see the significance of these signs. Grant us particularly hearts to receive what this is about.

May we recognize the war that is going on in our midst, around us, toward us.

Help your saints hear. This we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Please be seated. On a related note, I came across this probably about a month ago, and I kept it because I thought, interesting.

The CIA had an opening for an assassin. You know, it was probably posted on Facebook or yellow pages.

An assassin. So after all the background checks, interviews, and testing were done, there were three finalists, two men and a woman. For the final test, the CIA agents took one of the men to a large metal door and handed him a gun.

[7 : 39] He said to him, We must know that you will follow your instructions no matter what the circumstances. Inside the room, you will find your wife sitting in a chair. Kill her.

The man said, You can't be serious. I could never shoot my wife. The agent said, Then you're not the right man for the job. So the second man was given the same instructions.

He took the gun and he went into the room. All was quiet for about five minutes, and the man came out with tears in his eyes and said, I tried, but I can't kill my wife. The agent said, Then you don't have what it takes, so take your wife and go home.

Finally, it was the woman's turn. Are you thinking something's coming here? She was given the same instructions to kill her husband. She took the gun and went into the room.

Shots were heard one after another. Then they heard screaming, crashing, banging on the walls. After a few minutes, all was quiet. The door opened slowly, and there stood the woman, sweat on her brow.

[8 : 49] The gun was loaded with blanks, she said. I had to use the chair. It is awful.

It's shocking. Ruthless. Cold-blooded. It's exactly what the dragon does. Behind the scenes of spiritual warfare, Paul told us, We wrestle not with flesh and blood.

Our struggle is against the rulers, the authorities, the world forces, the spirits of wickedness, in heavenly places.

We wrestle with heavenly beings. We wrestle with heavenly forces that are shockingly ruthless.

We'll go to no end to devour us. They are assassins. We laugh at the little thing there, the CIA assassin, because it's silly.

[10 : 14] Who would do that? Well, we are talking about an enemy who will do that. In fact, has been doing it for a long time.

When did spiritual warfare begin? Did it begin when Jesus came? It began back in the Garden of Eden, in paradise, place of perfection.

It began there. It intruded into paradise. Adam, who had the job to guard the garden, right?

Allowed the serpent in. Allowed the serpent to speak to his wife. Just stood there. So the serpent, the dragon, deceives Eve to take from the one tree, just the one tree.

She could eat from any tree. Any, any tree. But the one. Just the one. God said no. Deceived her to eat that one because God was hiding something.

[11 : 23] God's holding back something. You can't trust that guy. The consequences to distrusting God's word, which is what it came down to, sin, disobedience, disobedience, is really rooted in distrust of God's word.

Has he said? The consequences were cursed. Eve was cursed. Adam was cursed. The ground was cursed.

And the serpent was cursed. The serpent. Remember the first part of the curse to the serpent? He lost something.

What'd he lose? His legs. Which means he had legs. He was not a snake.

He was a dragon. He was a serpent. Okay? He was not a snake. Snakes to this day. You can talk to my daughter who's worked with snakes.

[12 : 29] You can still feel the nub from where the legs used to be. Okay? On present day snakes. Okay? So you lose your legs first.

But then comes the real curse. The real curse is recorded in Genesis 3, verse 15, where the Lord God said to the serpent, because you have done this, I will put enmity, hostility, war between you and the woman.

Between your offspring and her offspring. Her offspring will bruise you on the head. You will bruise her offspring on the heel.

So the battle begins. You can trace these two offspring, the offspring of Eve and the offspring of the serpent, all the way through Scripture. The very next chapter in Genesis chapter 4, who are the offspring of Adam and Eve?

Cain and Abel. What happened? Cain killed Abel. Okay. Abraham comes along, he has two sons.

[13 : 52] First son, child of flesh, child of Hagar. Name is Ishmael.

And then, years later, has another son by his real wife, a son of promise called Isaac. Laughter. Ha, ha, right.

A woman of old age is going to have a son. What happened between Ishmael and Isaac? Right? It got so bad, Sarah banished Ishmael and his mother.

So we go on to the next patriarch. Isaac has two sons. Even in the womb, they're already battling.

In fact, even as they're born, they're battling because Esau comes out first, but Jacob's right on his heel.

[14:58] Sorry for the pun. The heel grabber is what he's called. Battle, battle, Saul, David. All through the New Testament, Old Testament, through the New Testament, two seeds.

One of flesh, one walking with God. One of faith, one of flesh. We come down to the first century and who is born in the first century?

We have Christ. Who's he opposed with? Well, let's just pick Caiaphas as a representative of the side walking with the flesh.

Caiaphas, the false high priest who seeks Jesus' death. These two lines, these two offspring, these two seeds all through the centuries. Okay?

This is a battle that goes all the way back. So Revelation 12 reveals to us this great battle, the dragon and the woman. And again, we're seeing a revelation, an uncovering, an unveiling of things we don't see in, with our own eyes.

[16:08] Okay? what's going on behind the scenes. So now at Revelation 12, we are midway in Revelation, literally. 22 chapters, we've done 11, we've come to 12.

But now we begin new scenes for the next three chapters, 12, 13, and 14, because when we get to 15, we get a whole another set of the seven bowls.

Right? So 12, 13, 14 all come together. They're showing us once again a new set of visions that start from the very beginning all the way to the end of chapter 14, the harvest at the end, the end judgment.

Okay? So once again, we go from beginning to end. Okay? It's just backing back up. Obviously, we're backing up here. Chapter 12, we're interpreting who's this woman and who does she give birth to and oh, okay, yeah, that's not that hard to figure out.

We're going back in time again and going forward. Once again, we see these mysterious figures of time, 1260 days, a time, times and half a time, 42 months.

[17:17] We see these references that are kind of, are they literal? Are they symbolic? What are they? Okay? So we see them again all through this. So chapter 12, we see three scenes verses one through six, the woman and the dragon.

Verses seven through 12, a war in heaven. Verse 13, back down to earth, the dragon and the woman. Okay? So we kind of see a beginning and end in chapter 12 of the woman and the dragon battle and wedged in between those, seven to 13, are these, this war in heaven.

What happened? How'd the dragon come to earth? Okay? Then chapter 13, we see two different servants of the dragon. Dragon works through a beast of the sea and a beast of the earth.

We see those two servants there. Chapter 14 then gets into kind of more of a heaven scene, the scene in heaven, last three messages and two harvests of the end.

So that's what's before us. So here we come to chapter 12. It begins with two signs, he tells us. Verse 1, a sign in heaven, a woman. Verse 3, another sign in heaven, a dragon.

[18:33] Two signs. What are we to understand with these two signs? Well, clearly what we're to see, first of all, is that there's two sides. There's a woman and a dragon.

One's prey, one's predator. One's prey, the woman, one's predator.

The hunter. The devourer. The assassin. So let's look, first of all, at the first sign, the woman.

It's more than a woman. She's a celestial woman. She's clothed with the sun. She's got the moon under her feet and a crown of 12 stars.

Who is this? This is not just an individual. Mary did not look like this. Mary was very humble.

[19 : 36] Mary was very plain. This is not Mary. This is bigger than Mary. It's not an individual. This is clearly the mother of Messiah.

So yes, Mary was the vehicle through which the Messiah came, but she was not alone. In fact, she technically, physically, is not the mother.

Is she? She was a virgin. She was a vessel. Joseph, Joseph, also, technically, not the father, but the legal father and therefore the lineage.

Both Mary and Joseph had lineage back to Judah. Both had lineage back to David through different sons of David, one through Solomon, one through Nathan.

So this is not an individual. This is a representative term of a community. Back in the Old Testament, Isaiah 54, among other places, Israel is called God's wife.

[20 : 42] Israel is a woman, representatively, who is betrothed to God. Remember, Hosea talks about the whole thing where God divorces and then he takes her back and the whole picture of God's love for Israel.

Jesus even said, right, in John 3, I'm the bridegroom. And then, of course, the New Testament picks up on this picture of the woman as the church.

The church is the bride of Christ, right? So we have the same picture coming up. Now, so what's the whole thing with the sun, moon, and stars?

What's that about? Well, if you remember all the way back to Genesis, remember a guy by the name of Joseph? Genesis 37. Joseph had dreams, remember? He had dreams.

And the dreams are what got him in trouble. Now, he didn't produce the dreams, God gave him the dreams, but when he talked about the dreams, his brothers didn't like the dreams. In one of his dreams, he told his brothers, you know, the sun and the moon and 11 stars bowed down to my star.

[21 : 55] Isn't that cool? Don't you love it? They didn't love it. His father, in fact, Jacob said, you mean to tell me, boy, that I and your mother and your 11 brothers are bowing down to you?

Is that what you're saying? Now, remember, this is Jacob's favorite son, but it only goes so far. Is that what you're telling me, boy? Yeah, dad, and I had another dream too.

Good old Joey. So, there we have a picture of the 12 tribes, 12 stars, 12 tribes, sun, moon, father, mother, whether that refers to Jacob and Rebecca or more technically to Jacob and Leah or perhaps even extending back to Abraham and Sarah or maybe it's extending back to Adam and Eve because she's the original woman through which both sides come.

So, and this, this, this woman is not just Israel. This woman has been in the first century now combined with not just Jews but also Gentiles.

In Christ, there may be one person, one body called the church. So, it includes both. It's not a replacement. It's a combining. That woman.

[23 : 29] Because you notice at the end of the chapter down verse 17, when the dragon can't get the woman, he goes after the offspring and who are the offspring of the woman? Well, the offspring are not only those who keep the commandments but also those who hold to the testimony of Jesus.

So, they're Christians. Okay? So, who's the woman? The woman is obviously Israel and the church.

What about verse 2, her crushing labor? Why? It's, the labor's quite intense. And I've never had labor, right? So, I don't know. Right?

So, you women could attest to how excruciating that is. I can't imagine. Don't even want to know. Right? But he seems to describe it as quite kind of maybe even beyond the excruciating physical pain.

That's what he says. Verse 2, she was pregnant. She was crying out in birth pains. Okay, that sounds normal. And the agony, the word there is torment of giving birth.

[24 : 34] Now, I'm sure it could be described as torment, but torment, that's an interesting word because we've had that word twice before in this book of Revelation. Chapter 9, it was what the scorpions did, right, for five months to the earth dwellers.

Right? They wanted, in fact, the pain was so bad they wanted to die. That was that torment. More of a mental torment. And then, it's also what was described of the effect of the two witnesses on earth dwellers.

Remember when the two witnesses in chapter 11 were finally killed? They were invincible until they were finally killed. And then, once they were finally killed, remember the earth dwellers rejoiced and threw parties and gave gifts.

Why? Because now the torment they experienced from these two witnesses has ended. What torment? They're still alive. Well, it's torment of the mind and the heart and particularly the conscience.

So, here is this woman who's tormented. How's she tormented? It's beyond the physical birth process. And obviously, this is bigger than just Mary giving birth to a child.

[25 : 53] This is bigger than that. This goes all the way back. So, here's a woman that leading up to the birth. Who brings the birth of the Messiah? It's the line of Christ, right?

It's Israel, it's Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, all the way down to David, all the way down.

It's that whole line of Christ that's tormented by the other offspring. Persecuted.

So, we'll get to that in a moment. So, who is this child? We see in verse 5 where we get to know who this woman is right away. She gives birth, verse 5, 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.

That's a really quick snapshot of Jesus, isn't it? Nothing about his life, nothing about his death, nothing about his resurrection. It just goes from he's born, this is his identity, he's the ruler, right?

[27 : 00] The rod of iron, and then he's caught up. Whoop, whoop, whoop, did we miss something there? Well, apparently it's not important right now. What we wanted to do simply was identify who her child is because the story isn't about him right now, it's about what happens to the mother, what happens to the women and her offspring.

That's the issue that is facing us. Because of the child, that's why, but, so her son, he rules the nations.

What's really interesting is this word for rule also means shepherd. He shepherds the nations with a rod, the word rod also means staff.

So he shepherds with a staff. By the way, rod and staff, where have we heard that before? Something has to do with a shepherd. Lord is my shepherd, something, thy rod, thy staff, they beat me.

No, comfort me. Comfort me. He's a shepherd. Interesting. Rod, staff, either way you call it, is the tool of a shepherd.

[28 : 11] shepherd. He's not just a ruler, he's a shepherd. He shepherds different ways. He comforts, he guides, he leads. We will also see another side of this shepherd who, who takes care of enemies.

Who takes care of enemies who seek to harm his sheep. The shepherd's not so nice with the enemies of the flock.

David knew how to do that. So, we see Psalm 2, he's called the same thing, the Lord sets his king in Zion.

This king in Psalm 2 that the Lord sets in on his throne in Zion is his son. My son I set in Zion, he's the one who will break the nations with a rod.

It will be his words, he's the stone that is rejected. He breaks them because of who he is. So, the woman and dragon battle goes back all the way.

[29 : 23] It began long ago, began way back in Eden, Genesis chapter 3. So, here's another perspective that helps kind of tie this together. Paul talks about the same thing.

You know that? He talks about a woman who's our mother. This is a woman that goes all the way back. Paul talks about it in Galatians chapter 4.

He calls it an allegory. He says this can be understood allegorically, symbolically, just like the book of Revelation. Given symbols.

Now, the symbols come from real things, real people, but those Abraham and Sarah and Isaac and Ishmael, they're still relevant today because they're still symbolically still going on.

Okay, so here's what Paul says in Galatians 4. He talks about who this woman is and how it is that she's tormented, how she's persecuted. Paul says in Galatians 4.22, for it is written, this is the scripture, that Adam had two sons, one by a slave woman, one by a free woman.

[30 : 37] The son of the slave woman was born according to the flesh. The son of the free woman, Sarah, was born how? According to a promise, God said, next year, you will have a son.

And Sarah did what? Ha, ha, right. Okay, we'll call them ha, ha, ha. Ha, ha, ha, ha, laughter.

Now, Paul says, now this can be interpreted allegorically. In other words, it's a historical fact, but there's truth in it that we can learn for today. These women are two covenants.

Oh, interesting, he's getting deep now. Two covenants, all the women, there's only one covenant back then. No, there's two. There's always been two. One from Mount Sinai, yeah, that's the one we call the covenant, Ark of the Covenant, the Covenant of the Law, right?

Yeah, that one's from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery. Ooh, that doesn't sound good. She is Hagar. So, Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia.

[31 : 50] She corresponds to the present Jerusalem. Strong words from Paul here, yeah? For she is in slavery with her children. If you're under the law, you're in slavery.

You need to be set free. But, the Jerusalem above is free. She's our mother. Two different mothers. One, Mount Sinai, present Jerusalem.

The other mother that's free, the one that's free is the one in heaven, the heavenly Jerusalem, the new Jerusalem. It's going to talk about that in Revelation as well. She's our mother.

For it's written, rejoice, O barren one who does not bear. Break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor. Same kind of terms we have in Revelation 12. For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband.

Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. Now he's going to apply this. This relates to us. You, brothers, are like Isaac, children of promise.

[32 : 53] But just as at the time he was born according to the flesh, Ishmael, persecuted him who's born according to the spirit, Isaac.

So it is now. So here you have these two seeds. Abraham and Sarah have a son of the flesh, not a faith of the flesh, Ishmael.

Thirteen years later, they have the son of the promise, Isaac, born simply because God said you will have a son beyond physical ability.

What happened with those two sons over the next few years? The teenager, I don't want to pick on teenagers, do I?

Thirteen year old Ishmael began persecuting little Isaac. Mama Sarah said, ain't happening in my house.

[34 : 05] You're out. Get out with your son. Get out. Abraham said, Sarah's in charge. Wow, huh?

That's the picture. Ever since then, we have two seeds. We have two offspring. We have one who is not walking with God, who is not of faith, who is simply fleshly, and then we have those that are born of God, who are born according to a promise, who are walking with God, those two clash.

And this one, the son of the flesh, will always persecute the son of faith. Paul said, you brothers like Isaac are also being persecuted by the flesh, not your flesh, the ones who are inspired and led by the dragon.

You remember the dragon, right? You guys all have experience with the dragon, don't you? You don't call him that, you call him other thing. Ephesians 2 says we used to serve him, right?

Before we were born again, were we not under his rule? You know, we know him well, and he still seeks to devour us, doesn't he?

[35 : 29] Peter says stand firm. Because the devil, like a lion, is seeking someone to devour, just like this dragon. He's got different names.

He's a lion, he's a dragon, he's a serpent, he's a devil, he's a satanas, a diabolos, tanayim, tanayin, tanayin is the Hebrew for dragon.

Tanayin. Sounds nakash, nakash is the dragon.

He's a spit a little bit, seems appropriate. I don't know why I'm giving you that. Great spiritual lesson. So you have the two seeds, the line of Seth Cain goes through Ishmael, Isaac goes from faith to flesh, the spiritual line of those born from heaven, from the heavenly mother, are persecuted by the fleshly offspring.

So that's one side, we have the prey, that's us, we're the prey. Okay? We don't seek the war that comes to us. We must be ready, we must be alert, right?

[36 : 52] We must have our armor on, because it's coming. Or we fall like Peter. As well intentioned as we are, if our guard is not up, we fall.

So sign number two, verse three, another great sign, a great red dragon, literally a fiery red dragon, red, like the one in chapter 17, the scarlet beast, also reddish, reddish because of the drinking of the blood of the saints, so reddish meaning the murderous kind of symbol.

We saw that back in chapter six with the red horse was the one that brought violence and bloodshed, so the red referring to the blood, violence.

So here's a red dragon that seeks to kill, obviously. And who is this predator? Well, this dragon is the hunter. This dragon is the source of evil kingdoms and spiritual warfare.

Let me show you that. First of all, the dragon we see in verse three, we're told exactly who this dragon is. Back down in verse nine, as we read further, we read in verse nine, who's this dragon?

[38 : 12] The dragon. The great dragon was thrown down. Who is that dragon? Well, it's the ancient serpent, talking about chapter three of Genesis, who's also called Diabolos, the devil.

Diabolos, meaning the slanderer, the accuser, and Satan, the adversary, the enemy, the foe from the beginning, the deceiver of the whole world.

That's really how he works. He was thrown down to earth and his angels thrown down with him. So that's who he is. He's that old serpent. He has, now here's the weird part, right?

The heads and the horns. He's got seven heads. A kind of dragon has seven heads. Are those heads, and I got thinking, okay, are those seven different heads sticking out?

Are they stacked on top of each other? What's going on? Are they, you know, I don't know. Doesn't matter. This is symbolism. This is a vision. Seven heads, ten horns, and seven diadems, one on each of the heads.

[39 : 21] So crowns. So, heads. What are they? Well, let me give you the short version. Chapter 17, verses 9 and 10, we will learn that heads refer to kingdoms, kings.

The seven heads of the scarlet beast in chapter 17, which is basically the same dragon, it has seven heads. The seven heads are seven mountains, so they are physical places on earth.

At the time, that was Rome. And they are kings, kingdoms, world empires. Isn't it something like five have already fallen, one is there, and one's yet to come, something like that?

The ten horns are other kings that come at the end. They are littler kings, they're not empires, but they're king powers. Diadems simply refer to the crowns that they have rule and they are conquerors.

Remember we talked about back in Revelation 6, the horsemen, the four horsemen. These are the same things.

[40 : 27] The first horseman is the conqueror, the second horseman is the one who brings war, violence, the third one brings pestilence, famine, and the fourth one brings death.

Remember, those are the very same four things Jesus talked about that would not be the end, simply the beginning of the end. Those things are going on all the time.

So you have conquerors come and go. You have violence comes and go. Sometimes it gets really, really bad, doesn't it? So when Julius Caesar took Jerusalem, it got really bad.

when Genghis Khan took the Roman Empire after it was crumbling, it got really bad.

Conqueror after conqueror, William the Conqueror, Attila the Hun, Napoleon, maybe even Hitler's in there.

[41 : 39] He was certainly a conqueror. You have conquerors come throughout time. I did a search, and from the time of Christ to now, there are notorious conquerors through the centuries who conquered places and were violent, bloodshed, followed by famine, death, right?

These things have happened all along. This dragon is behind it. This dragon works through beasts with heads.

This dragon has worked from the beginning to the end. This tail dragging, verse 7, he's a tail dragger.

That kind of sounds like a dinosaur. He's a tail dragger, that one. I say tail drag because that's actually the word. I think the translation says sweep. Yeah, his tail swept down.

Literally, his tail dragged them against their will. His tail dragged them from heaven to earth. Who wants to leave heaven? He drags them.

[42 : 58] But who are the stars? So, his tail swept down or dragged down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. So, it doesn't sound like they went willingly.

Right? So, a lot of people say, oh, those are his angels. Right? Because they all get cast down in verse 9. They all get cast out of heaven. The devil and his angels. But here, because he's cast, he doesn't cast.

So, here he's casting people out of heaven. So, we already learned stars can be angels. Stars can also represent people. We get the 12 stars, right? represent tribes, people.

So, there's a close connection between heaven and earth. Okay? We think, well, how do people get cast out of heaven into earth? we deal with heavenly beings every day.

Okay? Paul says, we wrestle not against flesh blood, but against what? Evil forces in the heavenlies. That's here.

[44 : 10] So, that doesn't explain how the stars come from heaven to earth. I've got no explanation for you, so thanks a lot, Bill. All right. Move on.

Sorry, I had to mention it. There are two options. I don't know which one it is. It's easier to go with, there are fallen angels. Okay, yeah, that's got that one. Problem is, no, never mind. So, then the devouring, the end of verse 4, what does this dragon do?

Well, he's ready, right? He takes down a third of the stars, and then he takes his stand before the woman, so that when she bears her son, he might devour it.

He's a predator. He seeks to kill. So, when Jesus is born, was there an attempt on Jesus' life when he was born? Yes, there was. Who did it?

Heron. King Heron. King crazy man. He was nuts. he killed lots of people, including his own family.

[45 : 14] Okay, so anybody to replace him, they're out. And so, who does he kill? He finds out from the Magi, where did you see the star?

How old is this child? Oh, the star was two years ago. Okay, so this child could be two years old by now. So, I'm going to kill every infant from two years and under. Talk about assassin.

Huh? So, he works through Herod. He works through the Nazarenes. When Jesus comes home and preaches, what a welcome reception he got, right?

They push him out, they try to push him over a cliff. They try to kill him. He somehow escaped. I don't know how he did. Somehow. Same thing happened in Jerusalem, John chapter eight.

He mentions, oh, oh, I and the father are one, by the way. I don't think he did it like that. Oh, I saw Abraham. Why do you tell you you're not even 40 years old?

[46 : 14] How did you see Abraham? You know, I saw Abraham. I know him. Talk to him on his day. Oh, and the father and I were one. So, what do they do?

Pick up stones, try to stone them. Didn't get stoned. But we have, in Jesus' life, you have murder attempt, assassination attempt, over and over and over and over again.

The dragon is trying to kill this Messiah. All the way back to Genesis 3. I will put enmity between you, serpent, and Eve, and your offspring, who are those who follow your ways, and her offspring, those who follow my ways.

All the way. So, in other words, the offspring of the dragon are those who are working under him.

Maybe not consciously. I didn't know I was serving the devil. If I didn't know, maybe I would have rebelled more, because I was good at rebelling. So, finally, we see this he tries to kill him, and obviously he did not succeed.

[47 : 38] Well, he finally did kill Jesus at the cross, but that was a short victory, because then he was raised and exalted to heaven. so we see verse 6 mentions a wilderness, a desert.

The woman, after the child is born and caught up to God, the woman flees into the wilderness. Now, watch this description of this wilderness. She flees into the wilderness where she has a place that has been prepared by God, this place in which she is to be nourished.

So she's to be nourished in a place prepared by God, which is clearly the wilderness, because that's where she goes. She goes to the wilderness, there's a place at the wilderness where she's nourished by God.

How nourishing is a wilderness? You ever think of a wilderness as nourishing? I mean, do you make vacation plans to go to the wilderness? Now, some people like the desert, I get it.

I'm not a desert person. And there's beauty in the desert, I get that, but it's a little hot for me, so I like rivers and coolness and shade, and I'm a wimp. So here's a place where God nourishes.

[48 : 53] Now, nourish is interesting because it's a word that means to be fed. Not just fed, but it's really about the whole nurturing experience, the whole training, the educating, the helping you grow up.

Nurture. She goes to the wilderness to grow. She goes to the wilderness to be trained, to be taught. Hmm.

Is the wilderness a teaching place? Do you all go to the wilderness? Not literally, but has God taken you to some wildernesses?

I've been there. I'm like, yeah, I didn't pick this place, but boy, do I learn some things because I'm in the wilderness. Psalm 23, back to the shepherd thing, he prepares a place.

Where? In the midst of my enemies. Let's have a place, you know, separated from the enemy. Why are we in the middle of the enemies, Jesus?

[50 : 02] He prepares a place right there in the middle. I'm already going through the valley of the shadow of darkness and now he's going to have a meal in the shadow of darkness and enemies all around.

Yeah, let's do that. Well, it's Jesus, so, okay. Not how I would plan it. So, why the wilderness?

What's God's purpose about wildernesses? Well, we just have to go back to Deuteronomy 8. At the very end of the wilderness experience, God explains the wilderness experience to them and prepares them for their next step as they're about to go into the promised land.

He says, there's some things you need to know and remember about this wilderness experience. Why did I take you through the wilderness for 40 years? Well, partly because of their lack of faith, right?

But there was a bigger purpose. So, Deuteronomy 8 says this, you shall remember. You shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these 40 years in the wilderness.

[51 : 12] Why? That he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.

Wilderness does that to us. It shows what's in our heart, whether we will really trust God or not. Because in the wilderness all the comforts are gone.

Okay? And the real heart comes out. And he humbled you and he let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know.

He did that so that you might know, he might make you know, that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Sounds like something Jesus learned. Right? Your clothing, by the way, in 40 years your clothing didn't wear out. 40 years your foot did not swell.

[52 : 19] That's pretty amazing. That's pretty good footwear. Lord. I can't keep, yeah, all right. Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines a son, the Lord your God disciplines you.

He's treating you as a son. So you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. Take care lest you forget the Lord by not keeping his commands and his rules and his statutes.

then your heart be lifted up and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and, by the way, terrifying wilderness.

What made it terrifying? With its fiery serpents. Well, that sounds familiar. And scorpions. That sounds familiar. Wilderness is a place of terror that has fiery serpents and scorpions, both images from the book of Revelation.

And, by the way, the terrifying wilderness not only has serpents and scorpions, but has thirsty ground where there's no water. So you have to learn to trust who, the same God who brought you water out of a flinty rock.

[53 : 47] That's not where you get water. You get water from streams. But this water comes from a rock. We know who the rock is, don't we? We know who the rock is.

He gives water. You have to learn that. Who led you in the wilderness with manna and your father's and none, that he might humble you and test you to do you good in the inn.

See, the wilderness is for our good. the wilderness is God's training ground. That's where he takes us.

We are part of this woman who flees to the wilderness to be nurtured by God. The wilderness is his training ground.

It's where we get humbled. It's where our heart is tested. It's where we learn to live by his word. it's where we learn to deal with serpents. It's where we learn to fight.

[54 : 53] It is sometimes a place that is terrifying. But it's also nurturing. It's where we learn to get the water that we need by faith alone.

It doesn't come by natural means. So here's a battle we're talking about today in Revelation 12 that is ongoing.

Let me just meddle with a few questions. Are you aware of this battle? Or are you deceived? Which side are you on?

Well, obviously, I'm on the good side. Are you? Are you? Yeah. Yeah. who are you following? And can you live in the desert?

If you don't have faith, no. Are you willing to live in the desert? In the wilderness? that's where God works.

[56 : 12] That's where God trains. That's where God protects. That's where God nourishes you. That's where He trains you. And terrifies you. For your good.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word. This is big stuff, big picture stuff. God, God, God,! as deceiving, as detestable as He is, is no match for you.

No match. So, help us to trust in you. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.