

# A Dragon in the Nativity: The Conflict at the Heart of Christmas

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[ 0 : 00 ] Some words from the first book of the Bible, Genesis chapter 3. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, Where are you? And he said, I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself.

He said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat? The man said, The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me the fruit of the tree and I ate.

Then the Lord God said to the woman, What is this that you have done? The woman said, The serpent deceived me and I ate. The Lord God said to the serpent, Because you have done this, Cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field.

On your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring.

[ 1 : 15 ] He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel. Our second reading this morning comes from the book of Psalms and Psalm 2.

So let me read Psalm 2 for us. Why do the nations rage, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us burst their bonds apart, and cast away their cords from us.

He who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, As for me, I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.

I will tell of the decree. The Lord said to me, You are my son. Today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.

You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Now, therefore, O kings, be wise. Be warned, O rulers of the earth.

[ 2 : 44 ] Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled.

Blessed are all those who take refuge in him. Well, please turn in your Bibles to Revelation chapter 12.

We've been working through these chapters in Revelation recently, and we've seen these various sets of seven. We had seven trumpets a couple of weeks ago, and these sets of seven are unveiling the unfolding of history between Christ's first and second comings.

It's a time of judgment upon our sinful worlds, but also a time of growth in the church and the protection of the church until Christ returns, and that's what we've been seeing in these chapters.

And now we break off from those sets of seven, and in Revelation 12, it's a key chapter in the book. It's the turning points. It marks the halfway points in the book, and we're going to be considering this this morning.

[ 4 : 03 ] So let me read this chapter for us. Chapter 12, and beginning verse 1. And another sign appeared in heaven.

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 had a place prepared by God, in which she was 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.

[ 5 : 31 ] 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 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 that his time is short.

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.

[ 6 : 43 ] But the woman was given 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 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 hold to the testimony of Jesus.

And he stood on the sand of the sea. Amen. May God bless his word to us.

Well, before we come to consider these words, let's spend a moment in prayer, shall we? Let's pray. O Lord, raise up thy power, and come among us, and with great might help us, that whereas through our sins and wickedness we are hindered in running the race that is set before us, with thy bountiful grace and mercy, speedily help and deliver us, through the satisfaction of thy Son, our Lord, to whom with thee and thy Holy Spirit be honour and glory, world without end.

[ 8 : 27 ] Amen. Well, at this point in the service, I'm hoping that we are joined by those at Kelvin Grove and Queen's Park, and welcome to them this morning.

Well, please do have those words in Revelation 12 open before you, and we're going to spend a few minutes thinking about these words and what they mean, and the explanation of them, and the implications for us today.

So do have that open in front of you, please. Now, Christmas is a time of joy and light in the darkness, certainly in the gloom of a Glasgow winter.

It's nice to have the lights and the brightness of the Christmas decorations. As you walk around the shops and the supermarkets, everyone is preparing for celebrations and for feasting. But why?

I wonder what answers those we live and work next to would give. Why are we celebrating? Why do we do Christmas? Some might give vague answers about a special time with family and community and coming together with others.

[ 9 : 39 ] Some will point to Christianity about the baby Jesus and the nativity scene. There is an awareness, isn't there, in the culture that it's something to do with this child born 2,000 years ago in Bethlehem.

I recently put on my phone a wee app for Google, and it gives you, like, shortcut routes, so, you know, your time to home. And the one yesterday was the route to Bethlehem. So there's an awareness there that Google knows that Christmas is coming, and there's something about Bethlehem.

I was quite amused, anyway. But there's an awareness that something significant happened in Bethlehem all those years ago. But the way that that is presented in our society, it's a sort of quaint picture, isn't it?

This nativity scene, this birth of a child, it's a scene of tranquility and quaintness, isn't it? We're not sure who he really is or what that has to do with us today, why it's a cause of celebration, but in schools up and down the land, children have been dutifully donning their tea towels as headscarves and enacting their roles in the school nativity.

Parents will do their best to conceal the disappointment that little Johnny has got the role of doorpost number two or innkeeper number three, whatever it is. But we do these nativity things. Schools all over the land are doing these plays.

[ 11 : 04 ] But what's it all about? There's one character that's yet to make an appearance in any nativity play that I've been to or taken part in, and it's a figure that really does explain what is at the very heart of Christmas.

This figure explains the deeper reality behind Christmas and why it happened in the first place. And it's the figure we've just been reading about in Revelation 12.

It's easy to overlook and forget the enormous red dragon that is in the Christmas story. You see, if nativity scenes, if nativity plays were true to the Bible's understanding of Jesus and his birth and its significance, then a dragon would feature pretty significantly.

But the thought of a seven-headed dragon with its ten horns eagerly awaiting the birth of Jesus so that he can pounce on him and devour him, it's hardly festive, is it?

It doesn't really fit the narrative that we see in our culture. You can imagine the wide-eyed horror of great Aunt Petunia at the school nativity as this dragon appears, this grotesque dragon appears there in the scene.

[ 12 : 29 ] But the Bible doesn't fit our preconceived notions of what Christmas ought to be about. The Bible will not allow us to indulge in fantasy or unreality.

No, our understanding of the Christmas story must be shaped by the whole Bible. And so this dragon that we read about here in Revelation 12, it must be included. The dragon has a place in the nativity scene.

And this important chapter in Revelation reveals to us the ultimate cause for the opposition we see in our world against Christians and against the church. This chapter explains the deeper reality.

The dragon, Satan himself, is behind all opposition to Christ and his church. He is the one behind the opposition to Jesus and his earthly ministry, his crucifixion, and the opposition the church has seen ever since.

He is the one behind it. But this chapter, as well as unveiling that reality, it also brings real comfort for us today because this dragon, despite his rage, despite his fury against those who follow Jesus, this dragon has been decisively beaten by Jesus.

[ 13 : 52 ] That is what we see in this chapter. the dragon has been decisively beaten. Christians can keep going in this world because we know that the dragon's rage is contained, it's limited.

And in the end, in the end, all will be okay. In the end, we will reign with Jesus forever. forever. And for those who are not yet Christians here, if you don't yet follow the Lord Jesus, this chapter presents you with real hope in the face of much bleakness in the real world.

There is much bleakness, isn't there, at this time? Just look at the news. Everywhere we look. But this chapter explains the reality behind what we see. And this chapter gives you real hope in the face of all that's going on in this world.

Because there is an explanation for the evil that we do see. There is an answer. And there is real hope for you if you put your trust in the one who the dragon sought to destroy.

So this morning, we're going to see the nativity as it ought to be with all the key players present. And we're going to see the conflict that's at the heart of Christmas.

[ 15 : 12 ] We'll take it in three sections this morning. Firstly, verses 1 to 6. We see the triumph of the church over the raging dragon. The triumph of the church over the raging dragon.

Now, the language here is pretty fantastic, isn't it? It blows our minds. These images of dragons and seven heads.

It's pretty astonishing, isn't it? But remember that Revelation is a book that paints pictures for us so that we would see reality, so that we'd understand key things about how God is at work in this world between Christ's first and second comings.

And these opening verses, they put in place for us the key players of human history. Three key figures are introduced. introduced, and these three key figures we need to get to grips with if we're to understand the world that we live in.

If you want to get to grips with the world and why it is as it is, then you need to look no further. Who these characters are and what they do explain reality?

[ 16 : 25 ] And the three key actors are the woman, the dragon, and the child. I'm going to ask a very simple question about each. Who are they and what do they do? So firstly, the woman.

This is the first person that we introduced here in this chapter. And as with so much of Revelation, the images are rich. They are saturated with pictures from the Old Testament, from the Scriptures.

John's first readers would have been well acquainted with the Scriptures and would have quickly made the connections when this woman is introduced. Much like we make connections when we see an image or hear a brief description, a whole bunch of meaning comes into our minds when we hear a short phrase.

So when you hear the two words, Sir Alex, you immediately think of the pinnacle of sporting achievements, of the great trouble winning team of 1998, of flowing, attacking football, all I need to say to you is, Sir Alex, and you think about all those things.

We associate meaning with a brief description and so too here. Verse 1, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, a crown on her head.

[ 17 : 43 ] It's an Old Testament image which speaks of Jacob, his wife, and the tribes of Judah. You see it in Revelation, in Genesis 37, and again a song of songs.

That image of a woman with this crown on her head is representative of the whole people of God. That is who this woman is representing. And it was from this people, it was from God's chosen people that God promised to bring a savior.

Those words we opened with from Genesis 3, remember those promises of one who had crushed the head of the serpent? Well that promised serpent crusher would come from the promised people.

It would come from one of the tribes of Judah. And that is why you have the description in verse 2 of this woman being pregnant.

This isn't, I don't think, a reference to Mary only. It certainly includes her, but the focus is on the whole community of faith. We'll see later on that this understanding of the woman as the whole people of God fits better with what we see later in the chapter about the women being persecuted, fleeing into the desert and so on.

[ 19 : 01 ] And of course in the background is Genesis 3 as I've mentioned. Eve would suffer in childbirth and one of her own offspring would bruise the head of the serpent.

there was going to be a child born who was going to do that. And that is what this picture is here. This pregnant woman about to give birth. This is the promised savior, the promised king that they are waiting for.

The woman representing God's covenant people gives birth to the one who will take back what was lost in the garden. And we'll see how later.

But that's the first figure. This woman is representative of the whole people of God and from those people would come a promised savior. That's person number one.

Two is the dragon. Verse three you get a second sign appearing in the heavens and it was a great red dragon with seven heads. And we're not left in any doubt as to who this figure really is.

[ 20 : 07 ] Look down a couple of verses to verse nine. The great dragon was thrown down that ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan the deceiver of the whole world.

It is the very same character we bumped into in Genesis three. The serpent who deceived and tempted Eve in the garden. this dragon this Satan is real.

We're used to dragons being firmly located in the realm of fantasy aren't we? We think the Hobbit or Lord of the Rings something that is unreal. It belongs to that world of fantasy.

And we bump into this sort of language in the Bible we can make the mistake of placing it in a similar category. This dragon that we read about in Revelation 12 it must be sort of in the fantasy category.

It's not really real. No, no, no. This dragon is very real. And although we may think he has no place at Christmas the Bible placed him firmly in the scene.

[ 21 : 19 ] And if you pay attention you spot his influence everywhere today from the very serious to the more trivial.

We see his fingerprints everywhere. We've seen in the recent chapter of Revelation that he is the one responsible for all that we see in our world. The wars, those who are suffering. This dragon is behind it.

He is the one at the very heart of it. And this may seem like a trivial example but remember that above all things Satan is the deceiver.

He will cloak his real purposes under the banner of harmless fun. But one of the contenders for Christmas number one this year was a song put out by Doctor Who would you believe it?

The TV show put out a single and it's called The Goblin Song. And in the video that's been released you see a baby. Being sent along a conveyor belt into the jaws of the Goblin King.

[ 22 : 22 ] While a group of goblins sing and dance around in glee. And the words of the song go like this. We've got baby feet, we can feast.

We can dine three days at least. Baby blood and baby bones, baby butter for baby scones, little baby feet, little baby toes. every one of us wants to nose.

And it goes on. Now that's all presented as harmless fun. And of course Doctor Who sweeps in and saves the day, but that is the song they are putting out that people will be singing and having in their heads.

It is deeply sinister, isn't it? it is a glorification of child sacrifice. It is a return to the worship of Moloch. You can read about that in the Bible.

Child sacrifice, singing songs, glorying in it. It is horrendous. And that seems a trivial example but there is something deeply sinister about it, isn't there?

[ 23 : 31 ] There is all the marks of a dragon devouring a child. It couldn't get any more vivid than that, could it? This goblin king devouring children. This dragon is the source of evil in our world.

And this dragon lurks in the shadows all the way through the Bible. He is there in the very first pages that we have seen in Genesis 3, deceiving Eve, persuading her to eat the fruit.

He was there tempting Judas to betray Jesus. He prowls around today, provoking wars, as we've seen in recent chapters in Revelation, deceiving humanity, spreading lies, persecuting believers.

The dragon is Satan, the ancient serpent, a real individual wielding real power, but it's a limited power.

It's limited because of the final person in this opening section, and it's the child. We have the woman, we have the dragon, we have the child.

[ 24 : 45 ] The promise Christ is born. Jesus invades the dragon's territory, and the dragon is rightly threatened. Look at the dragon's posture.

Middle of verse 4, the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child, he might devour it. He's hanging over the labor ward, ready to devour the child that is born, and he's doing that because he knows who this child is.

He knows that there is a promised child coming who will crush his own head. He knew this child was a threat to his own influence and his own kingdom.

Notice the description of the child in verse 5. She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron. That's a reference to Psalm 2, which we read earlier, which promised a Messiah, a Christ, one who would come and rule the nations.

And the one that Psalm 2 pointed forward to had at last come, the promised one. That is the one who Satan seeks to devour. At that point, the narrative speeds up very quickly.

[ 26 : 13 ] John's vision almost goes into time-lapse mode. It suddenly skips on and we see the entirety of Jesus' earthly ministry fly by in half a sentence. He is born and in the second half of verse five.

He is swept up, caught up to God and to his throne. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, and ascension all contained within a couple of words. And the point is that although Satan was crouching, waiting for the Christ, he failed in his bid to destroy him.

Even when Satan thought he delivered his decisive blow with Jesus' death on the cross, he was only playing into God's hands, he was only playing into God's plan. It was through Jesus' death and his resurrection that the crushing blow was delivered to Satan himself.

Jesus wins. He's victorious. That's the big picture we need to be clear on. That is the implication of that verse five. The fact he was caught up to God on his throne.

Satan could not get his claws into him. Satan failed. That's not the whole story. Jesus has ascended into heaven, but he will return one day and bring about final judgments.

[ 27 : 38 ] but until that day, until Christ returns, we will have to endure Satan's attacks on the church.

Look onto the final section of the final verse of the section. Look at verse six. The woman fled into the wilderness where she is a place prepared by God in which she will be nourished for 1,260 days.

And that time reference, those 1,260 days, is a reference to these last days in which we live now. We've bumped into this time reference before in Revelation, and it's the time between Christ's ascension and his coming return, the age that we live in right now.

And these words are to be a comfort to God's people in this present age. see, the wilderness is a temporary location as God's people journey towards the land he's promised for his people.

It is a place where he provides for his people, where he protects his people. And for John's first readers, the wilderness was a place of spiritual refuge.

[ 29 : 00 ] And that is the message for us today. God's woman represents the church through all ages. And we have fled into the wilderness waiting for our king to return.

And as we live in the wilderness, it is a place where we are nourished. God does look after us. He does protect us. He does provide for us. We need to remember that Satan has been dealt the decisive blow.

and yes, we will face attacks from him and his followers. But ultimately, Satan cannot do us real harm. And we will know the law's protection and provision until the end.

The dragon's rage is real. But the remainder of the chapter underlines the key message here in verse six. We can persevere because we know who really is reigning on the throne and we know that Satan really is the defeated enemy.

And we'll see more briefly with our final two points, the dragon's rage explained for the church and also how it's experienced by us today.

[ 30 : 17 ] Well, please do have those words again in Revelation 12 open. I'm going to think about the second and third parts from verse seven to the end of the chapter. So looking at the second section there from verse seven, we see the dragon's rage explained for a triumphant church.

The dragon's rage explained. And these verses, they give us another perspective on what we've just read. This is the events of Jesus' death and resurrection from a heavenly perspective.

Just notice in verse seven, John and his vision is now considering the heavens. Now war, verse seven, arose in heaven. So this is the events of Jesus' earthly ministry from the perspective of heaven.

And the results of Jesus' decisive blow on the cross was, as verse eight explains, defeat for Satan in heaven. And he was therefore thrown down to earth.

earth. We see here what kind of being Satan is and what he is doing in this present age. These verses therefore explain to the church what we see in the world today and why it's so.

[ 31 : 42 ] What kind of being is Satan? Well, look at verse nine. Satan, the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.

Satan, the dragon, is a deceiver. That is his key characteristic and that is what he's been about from the very beginning. Deception was his tactic with Eve in the Garden of Eden, twisting and misrepresenting God's word and he's not changed.

Satan deceives. He accuses God's people. Look on to verse 10. 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. See, that is what he's about. That is what Satan does.

He accuses day and night. Satan has very limited weaponry, but it can wound very deeply. He can and does discourage Christians all the time.

[ 33 : 04 ] He deceives them, speaking untruths about God and his character, casting doubt on God's purposes and plans, sowing confusion about what God has said in his word and tempting people to disobey him.

He accuses Christians, whispering half truths and inducing false guilt. guilt, which discourages and sometimes derails Christians. That is what Satan does.

but we must remember the next sentence. We need to hear again what is true of Christians and it's this.

We are triumphant. Satan has no authority over us. We do not need to listen to his deceptions and lies and accusations. Look at verse 11.

and they, that is the church, Christians, they have conquered him, Satan, by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony.

[ 34 : 11 ] For they love not their lives, even under death. See, the church has conquered Satan and they have done so, not through anything they themselves have done.

We don't conquer Satan in our own strength, no. We do it through Jesus' death and resurrection. We do it through the blood of the lamb. And we do it through our continued witness to Jesus.

Christians have been washed clean by the blood of Jesus and there can be no condemnation on that coming day of judgment. Satan's accusations can't stick. we have conquered through Jesus' death and we conquer him as we witness to Jesus.

That is how we conquer Satan here and now. We testify to Jesus, the lamb king who was slain for our sin, who now reigns over the universe, who will come again to judge the living and the dead.

We keep testifying to that. We keep speaking about it. We keep gathering as a church and proclaiming it. Don Carson put it this way, the hosts of darkness are pushed back by Christians bearing witness, giving testimony to who God is and what he's done in Christ Jesus.

[ 35 : 42 ] How else can we push back Satan and his forces? We will be defeated if we simply keep silent. If we never share the gospel with anybody else, we will find ourselves defeated.

You will not be pushing back the frontiers of darkness. But this is how Satan is defeated by the blood of the lamb and by the word of our testimony.

We keep going. We keep proclaiming Christ as a church. That is how we defeat Satan. But Satan rages against that.

Satan cannot abide the church being the church. He cannot abide Christians speaking about the Lord Jesus. Look at the end of verse 12. 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.

See, Satan now knows that his time is short. Jesus' death and resurrection has given him a countdown. He knows his time is coming to an end.



[ 36 : 54 ] He knows his days are numbered. And the nearer the final day comes, the more wrathful he will be. And that is what we see in the last section of this chapter.

We have the dragon's rage explained. This is why he is doing what he's doing. He's been cast down. He's been defeated. He rages against the church. And against Christians.

But we know ultimately he is defeated. We know ultimately that we triumph as Christ's church. But we do need to see in this last section of verse 13, the dragon's rage experienced.

We do experience his rage. Look at verse 13. 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.

He pursued, in other words, the church of Jesus Christ. He pursued her. God's grace. But the church is not defenseless.

[ 38 : 02 ] Look on to verse 14. But the woman was given two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness to a place where she is to be nourished for a time and times and half a time.

The church goes into this wilderness and there the church enjoys the Lord's provision and protection. She is nourished in the wilderness.

But even there, the serpent hunts her down. Look at verse 15. Water spewing out from the dragon's mouth, seeking after the woman to sweep her away with a flood.

There is something of a tension in these verses. And it's a tension that we've seen throughout church history. And it's a tension that we experience today.

On the one hand, the church is eternally secure. We are being nourished in the wilderness until Christ returns. We are being fed and protected and nourished all the time.

[ 39 : 17 ] But on the other hand, we experience real difficulty. Yes, since John first penned these words all those millennia ago, the church has grown exponentially.

It continues to grow today. Jesus' words have proved true, have they not? God is building his church and the gates of hell will not prevail against us. Around the world, the church is growing exponentially.

Every day, many people are professing faith in the Lord Jesus and joining his eternal family. That is happening today. But it's also true that the church has faced constant persecution.

Alongside that growth, there has always been persecution. Look at how verse 17 describes this reality. 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 hold to the testimony of Jesus.

The dragon is furious with the church and with every Christian. salvation. He persecutes the church here on earth, not because he can somehow think he can take away our salvation, but because he knows he can't.

[ 40 : 45 ] He knows he cannot prize away God's people from him. And he hates that fact. He faces sure and certain defeat and he rages against it.

He cannot stand the church and God's children. Satan hates the church with every fiber of his being and he will resist it in any way that he can.

He will try and seek and stop the advance of the gospel in any way that he can. You see that all the way through the book of Acts. Great gospel growth, huge growth.

But alongside it, great gospel opposition. Revelation 12 is not a chapter that encourages Christians to bury their head in the sands.

No, it's a chapter full of realism. Yes, Jesus wins. That's the big picture. Jesus has crushed the head of the serpents.

[ 41 : 57 ] Yes, Satan's days are numbered and yes, he knows it, but he is furious. And we will feel that fury in the here and now. But it's a fury that can do no permanent damage.

Satan's wounds will not last and they will not. They cannot keep you. They cannot keep me from our eternal destiny. They cannot touch the eternal promises that we have in Jesus.

One preacher put it this way. Satan's attacks against our buildings, our budgets, and our bodies show only that he can do nothing about our blessing in Christ and about the fact that we belong forever to Jesus.

He can't touch those realities. We are afflicted in every way, writes the Apostle Paul, but not crushed, perplexed, but not driven to despair, persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down, but not destroyed, always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus might also be manifested in our bodies.

And hear the words of Jesus, the one who has crushed the head of the serpent. He said, in the world, you will have tribulation, but take heart, I have overcome the world.

[ 43 : 40 ] We belong to Jesus. Satan cannot touch us. Well, let's pray, shall we? And then we'll close our time together with our final hymn. Father God, we thank you for the vividness of this chapter, which alerts us to hidden realities.

We need the vividness of these images to grasp our minds and our hearts. And so help us to grasp the reality of that great dragon, but help us also to be comforted by the reality that the promised child has come, that he has defeated our great enemy, and that we are safe, nourished forever by you.

so comfort us, give us great comfort this Christmas time, as we remember with great joy the child who was born, the one who washes us by the blood of his own death, so that we might know the forgiveness of our sins, and the great hope of everlasting life.

Fill our hearts, and our minds, and our voices with that great joy, today, and tomorrow, and every day, for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.