

## **“Hold to the Testimony of Jesus”** (Revelation 12:1–17)(12.12.21)

Revelation 12:1–17 (NIV84) *The Woman and the Dragon*

**12** A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head.<sup>2</sup> She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.<sup>3</sup> Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads.<sup>4</sup> His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born.<sup>5</sup> She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.<sup>6</sup> The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.

<sup>7</sup>And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.<sup>8</sup> But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven.<sup>9</sup> The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the

whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth,  
and his angels with him.

<sup>10</sup> Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:

“Now have come the salvation and the power and  
the kingdom of our God,

and the authority of his Christ.

For the accuser of our brothers,

who accuses them before our God day and night,  
has been hurled down.

<sup>11</sup> They overcame him

by the blood of the Lamb

and by the word of their testimony;

they did not love their lives so much  
as to shrink from death.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore rejoice, you heavens

and you who dwell in them!

But woe to the earth and the sea,

because the devil has gone down to you!

He is filled with fury,

because he knows that his time is short.”

<sup>13</sup> When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. <sup>14</sup> The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent’s reach. <sup>15</sup> Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. <sup>16</sup> But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. <sup>17</sup> Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

## **The word of God for the people of God.**

LET US PRAY.

Title: **“Hold to the Testimony of Jesus”**

INTRODUCTION:

This is a mysterious text. And, you may wonder why I would use it for a sermon in this Advent Season. At first reading, you might think, “What the Devil is going on?” Exactly right. The Devil is a

central player here; not only in the text, but in heaven and on earth. That seems pretty clear, even at first glance.

How is it connected to the birth of Jesus? To answer that you must understand that Jesus is the Christ – the Messiah – the Savior of the World. You must understand that Jesus' birth is His First Coming. You must understand that there is a Second Coming of Jesus. The Advent season is one of anticipation. We celebrate what God has already done and what God has promised to do.

As a matter of fact, this scripture ties directly to Christmas Day. I happen to know a pastor who preached on this text on Christmas Eve. The child born to the woman was Jesus. But, let's not get ahead of ourselves.

BODY:

What cannot be missed here is conflict – more explicitly, an all-out cosmic clash. There was war in heaven. The dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring. Even nature takes part in this cosmic conflict: “the earth helped the woman.”

No doubt, there is a least one person thinking, “C'mon Pastor Don, give it a rest. It's the Christmas season. We just want to think about Joy

to the World and Peace on Earth.” First of all, this is not the Christmas season – it is the Season of Advent. Secular Christmas started shortly after Halloween and ramped up till Thanksgiving. Now, it is full speed ahead towards the culmination of the consumer Christmas. Second of all, Christmas is about the Christ Child; the child who is Messiah and Savior. If we need a Savior, that means we need saving.

The natural question that follows is, saving from what? We need to be saved from the devil who is filled with fury. We need to be saved from the accusations of Satan. We need to be saved from sin and death.

Wait a second pastor, the text says, “They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.” You are right, I am glad you are paying attention. There is the first death and there is the second death. There is the death of mortal bodies. For those whose name is not written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, there is the second death in hell. Revelation 21:27 (NIV84)

Nothing impure will ever enter it [the New Jerusalem], nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

If reading and hearing this twelfth chapter caused you to think of the Garden account in Genesis, there is good reason. We have the evil and crafty Serpent deceiving Eve and the disappointing Adam. Almighty God establishes the framework of human history when He confronts our wayward parents. Genesis 3:14–15 (NIV84)

<sup>14</sup> So the Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this,

“Cursed are you above all the livestock  
and all the wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly  
and you will eat dust  
all the days of your life.

<sup>15</sup> And I will put enmity  
between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and hers;  
he will crush your head,  
and you will strike his heel.”

The word enmity (the state or feeling of being actively opposed or hostile to someone or

something) is not often used today. It seems weak compared to what we hear in Revelation chapter 12. Although, the crushing and striking terminology is somewhat insightful.

Of course, it is baby Jesus that is THE OFFSPRING that will bring victory. 1 John 3:8 (NIV84) He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. **The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.** But at the same time, all faithful followers of Jesus are the rest of the Woman's offspring. As noted in the 17<sup>th</sup> verse - Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

So, whether you want to acknowledge it or not, you and I individually are at war with the Devil. What evidence can I offer? Let us start with an inward look. Do you battle against sin? Of course you do, because if you don't, that means you have surrendered to sin. The paradox is that the more victory over sin you have, the more you will realize how far we miss the mark of the Lord Jesus.

Does it feel like I am beating you up or condemning you? Because I am not, for I row the same boat as you. Our Accuser, Satan, uses that

tactic. I point you to the solution and the retort to Satan. It is in the hymn we just sang, **There is Power in the Blood.**

Would you be free from the burden of sin?

There's pow'r in the blood, pow'r in the blood;

Would you o'er evil a victory win?

There's wonderful pow'r in the blood.

*Chorus: There is pow'r, pow'r,*

*Wonder-working pow'r*

*In the blood of the Lamb;*

*There is pow'r, pow'r,*

*Wonder-working pow'r*

*In the precious blood of the Lamb.*

Let me point you to another hymn that proclaims the sacrificial work of the Lord Jesus, **Nothing but the Blood:**

1. What can wash away my sin?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

What can make me whole again?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Refrain:



O precious is the flow  
that makes me white as snow;  
no other fount I know;  
nothing but the blood of Jesus.

For further evidence of Satan's war against humanity, look at the world. We have access to 24 hours a day news through television, radio, print media, and the Internet. What percentage of it is good news? We have COVID-19 and all the variants. There are wars and rumors of war. We have so-called natural disasters like the terrible tornados that happened yesterday in Kentucky and other places. We are bombarded with news about political polarization, racism, murder, and crimes of greed and covetousness. We have our history books.

One of those history books is our Bible, His Story; the story of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world – the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only does our Bible record the utter failure of the human race to live in accordance to God's will, we have a record of the cosmic conflict between good and Evil, God and the Devil.

The Old Testament is the history of The Chosen People, the nation of Israel. Even though God Himself led them, they continually grumbled and groused. The prophets were sent to warn this

wayward people, but they continued to worship idols and sin against each other and Almighty God, the Lord Jehovah. Jesus was the promised Messiah, but when He came to His people, His people would not receive Him. Worse than that, they in partnership with the pagan authorities, crucified the Savior of the world.

We celebrate the cosmic conflict at Christmas. God the Holy Spirit came upon the Virgin Mary and she conceived the Lord Jesus. Angels of God visited Mary and Joseph. Even lowly shepherds were involved. Luke 2:9–14 (NIV84)

<sup>9</sup>An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup>Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

<sup>13</sup> **Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared** with the angel, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest,

and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”

The great dragon the Devil knew this too. He used King Herod who sent his soldiers to kill all the male children under two years of age. While this brought great sorrow, it failed to kill Jesus, whose father Joseph was warned by another angel to flee to Egypt. Failing to kill Jesus, Satan tries to fool Jesus, which we read about during the temptation in the wilderness. How did Jesus refute Satan? With the Word of God. The scriptures also tell us that Satan played a part in Jesus' crucifixion – remember that Satan entered into Judas the betrayer.

Let us not pass by the Garden of Gethsemane without noting a critical issue that is precisely pertinent to our subject matter. The Lord Jesus prayerfully wrestles with the Heavenly Father's pending plan for Jesus to lay down His life on that Calvary Cross. "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done" ([Luke 22:42](#)). God's decision was that Jesus would take upon Himself the sin of the world and the commensurate wrath of the Father. Jesus paid for our sin, once and for all. Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Having established the evidence of a holy war, let me ask you, **Are you a Soldier of the Cross?**

1. Am I a soldier of the cross,  
a follower of the Lamb,  
and shall I fear to own his cause,  
or blush to speak his name?

2. Must I be carried to the skies  
on flowery beds of ease,  
while others fought to win the prize,  
and sailed through bloody seas?

3. Are there no foes for me to face?  
Must I not stem the flood?  
Is this vile world a friend to grace,  
to help me on to God?

4. Sure I must fight, if I would reign;  
increase my courage, Lord.  
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,  
supported by thy word.

This brings us to the twice mentioned security, which is emphasized in the closing of this chapter. We overcome the Enemy by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony. We are the offspring that obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

This means holding to all that Jesus taught. This means holding to all that the scriptures reveal

about Jesus. This means holding to all that you have experienced of Jesus. If you are a follower of Christ, you have a personal testimony. You have been born from above. How did that happen? **It is only testimony if you tell it. Do you?** Will you hold to all three of these testimonies, even to the point of death? Jesus says, we must if we wish to overcome.

This concept of the testimony of Jesus and the word of God is central to the Book of Revelation and in fact to all of scripture. Right now, I will limit my argument to the climax of our Bibles, the Apocalypse, the Revelation of Jesus given in the book of the same name. We see it in the opening three verses of this book:

Revelation 1:1–3 (NIV84) *Prologue*

**1** The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,<sup>2</sup> who testifies to everything he saw—that is, **the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.**<sup>3</sup> Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

Then Revelation 1:9 (NIV84) *One Like a Son of Man*

<sup>9</sup>I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of **the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.**

Revelation 6:9 (NIV84)

<sup>9</sup>When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of **the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.**

Revelation 20:4 (NIV84)

<sup>4</sup>I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of **their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God.** They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

We are called to overcome even to the point of death. My friends, the war is reality. Being a Christian is to be bold as we hold to the testimony of Jesus. Charles Spurgeon preached, there can be no victory without a battle. Paul exhorts us to put on the whole armor of God in Ephesians chapter

six. And, in Romans chapter eight he declares that we are MORE than conquerors.

CONCLUSION:

### **There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood**

1. There is a fountain filled with blood  
drawn from Emmanuel's veins;  
and sinners plunged beneath that flood  
lose all their guilty stains.

2. The dying thief rejoiced to see  
that fountain in his day;  
and there may I, though vile as he,  
wash all my sins away.

3. Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood  
shall never lose its power  
till all the ransomed church of God  
be saved, to sin no more.

4. E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream  
thy flowing wounds supply,  
redeeming love has been my theme,  
and shall be till I die.

5. Then in a nobler, sweeter song,  
I'll sing thy power to save,

when this poor lisping, stammering tongue  
lies silent in the grave.

My friends, today you have heard the testimony of  
Jesus. The Lamb of God promised in John 14:19  
(NIV84)

**<sup>19</sup> Before long, the world will not see me anymore,  
but you will see me. **Because I live, you also will  
live.****

**Will you hold to Him?**

Amen and amen. Let us pray.