

“God with Us”

Summary

Christmas is far more than a sentimental celebration—it's a declaration of war. This powerful message reframes our understanding of Jesus' birth by revealing that Jesus came to earth with a specific military purpose: to undo and destroy the works of the devil. Drawing from 1 John 3:8, we discover that the incarnation wasn't just about peace and goodwill, but about launching a decisive campaign against the enemy's kingdom. When Herod ordered the slaughter of male children two years and under, he was responding to a genuine threat—a King had been born who would overthrow demonic powers. Yet even in that tragedy, we find hope in Jeremiah's prophecy that Rachel should stop weeping, for her children would return from the land of the enemy. This reminds us that death itself is a defeated foe. As we navigate our own wilderness seasons—those hidden, difficult times of preparation—we're being fashioned for our own unveiling, just as John the Baptist was prepared in the desert before his public ministry. We're not spectators in this cosmic conflict; we're participants with assigned roles in advancing God's kingdom. The sufferings we endure now aren't worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed in us, and creation itself is groaning, waiting for God's sons and daughters to be manifested and continue the work Jesus began.

Main Points – God with Us

Title: Christmas: A Declaration of War Against the Enemy

Sermon Summary:

This sermon reframes the Christmas narrative as a divine declaration of war against the devil and his works. Rather than viewing Christmas as merely a peaceful celebration, Pastor Rob presents the birth of Christ as the strategic deployment of heaven's warrior-king to destroy the works of the enemy. The message emphasizes that just as Jesus was revealed to undo and destroy the works of the devil, believers are also being prepared in their own "wilderness" seasons for their unveiling as sons and daughters of God. The sermon challenges Christians to see themselves not as spectators but as active participants in God's redemptive war, carrying the same mission Christ came to accomplish. It concludes with an encouragement that though we live in a world at war, God will finish what He began, and believers have a significant role to play in advancing His kingdom.

Key Points:

- Christmas represents a declaration of war, not just a peaceful celebration, as Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil
- The slaughter of infants by Herod reveals the spiritual warfare surrounding Christ's birth and continues today through various forms of destruction
- God's promise through Jeremiah offers hope that those lost in this war will return from the land of the enemy
- Just as John the Baptist was hidden in the wilderness until his unveiling, believers are being prepared for their own manifestation
- Creation is groaning and waiting for the revealing of the sons and daughters of God who will continue Jesus' mission
- We are not spectators but participants in God's plan, called to destroy the works of the devil in our generation
- Jesus has completed His part and now sits at the right hand of the Father, waiting for His enemies to become His footstool through the work of His people
- The increase of Christ's government and peace will have no end, and God is actively advancing this in our generation
- Believers must recognize their calling and cooperate with God's purpose for their lives in this present hour

Scripture Reference:

- 1 John 3:8 - "For this purpose the Son of God was revealed, that he might undo and destroy the works of the devil"
- Mark 4:39-41 - The calming of the storm and the question "What manner of man is this?"
- Matthew 2:17-18 - The fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy about Rachel weeping for her children
- Jeremiah 31:15-17 - The original prophecy promising that the children will return from the land of the enemy
- Isaiah 9:2-7 - The prophecy of the child born whose government will increase forever
- Luke 1:67-80 - Zacharias's prophecy about his son John and deliverance from enemies
- Romans 8:18-19 - Creation waiting for the revealing of the sons of God

Small Group Study Guide – Small Group Study Guide – God with Us

"Christmas - A Declaration of War"

Series: What Manner of Man Is This?

Main Text: 1 John 3:8 - "The reason the Son of God was revealed was to undo and destroy the works of the devil."

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Icebreaker Question:

What's one Christmas tradition that's meaningful to you, and why? How does it connect (or not connect) to the deeper meaning of Jesus' birth?

Key Sermon Points

1. **Christmas is a Declaration of War** - Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil
2. **We Are Part of God's Army** - Like John the Baptist, we each have a role to play
3. **The Wilderness Prepares Us** - Our difficult seasons are where God shapes us for our unveiling
4. **We Are Being Revealed** - Creation is waiting for the manifestation of God's sons and daughters
5. **Going Before Others** - We freely give what we've freely received

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Message (15 minutes)

1. **Pastor Rob said, "Christmas is a declaration of war." How does this perspective change or challenge your traditional view of Christmas?**
2. **Read 1 John 3:8 together. What are some specific "works of the devil" that Jesus came to destroy? What does this look like in practical, everyday life?**
3. **The sermon connected Herod's slaughter of children with spiritual warfare today. How do you see this same spiritual battle playing out in our current culture?**

Personal Reflection (20 minutes)

4. John the Baptist "was in the wilderness until the day of his unveiling." Have you experienced a "wilderness season"? Looking back, how did God use that time to prepare you?
5. Read Romans 8:18-19. The pastor said creation is waiting for the revealing of God's sons and daughters. Does thinking of yourself as someone the world is waiting for feel empowering, intimidating, or both? Why?
6. The Starbucks story illustrated "going before others" and freely giving what we've received. When have you experienced someone going before you or serving you unexpectedly? How did it impact you?

Going Deeper (15 minutes)

7. The sermon mentioned that Jesus is "waiting until all His enemies become His footstool" (Psalm 110:1). What role do we play in that waiting? What does it mean that we're not spectators but participants?
8. Read Jeremiah 31:15-17. How does this prophecy offer hope to those grieving during the Christmas season? How can we minister to people for whom Christmas is painful rather than joyful?
9. The pastor asked, "Why are you alive now?" How would you answer that question? What unique calling or purpose do you sense God has for you in this specific time in history?

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Jesus didn't come just to be adored; He came to destroy the enemy's work
- ✓ We are not average people—we carry Christ and have a role in God's redemptive plan
- ✓ Wilderness seasons are preparation, not punishment
- ✓ The increase of God's government is happening now, in our generation
- ✓ We reveal Jesus by "going before others" in service and love

Practical Application (15 minutes)

This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE of the following to put into practice:

1. **Identify Your Battlefield**

- Where is God calling you to engage in spiritual warfare through prayer, service, or witness?
 - Write down 3 specific "works of the devil" you see in your sphere of influence
 - Commit to pray against these daily this week
- 2. Practice "Going Before"**
- Like the Starbucks story, look for 2-3 opportunities this week to serve or bless someone unexpectedly
 - Pay for someone's coffee, let someone go ahead of you in line, give an unexpected gift
 - Do it intentionally as an act of revealing Jesus
- 3. Reframe Your Wilderness**
- If you're in a difficult season, journal about what God might be preparing you for
 - Ask God: "What are you forging in me right now?"
 - Share your insights with one trusted friend or group member
- 4. Minister to Someone Grieving**
- Reach out to someone you know who has lost a loved one and for whom Christmas is difficult
 - Don't try to "fix" their pain, just be present and remind them of Jeremiah 31:16-17

Accountability Question:

Who will you share your chosen action with, and when will you report back?

Prayer Focus (10 minutes)

Pray together for:

- Boldness to see ourselves as part of God's army, not spectators
- Eyes to see the "works of the devil" we're called to destroy in our spheres
- Strength for those in wilderness seasons—that they would sense God's preparation
- Opportunities to reveal Jesus through unexpected service and love
- Comfort for those grieving during this season
- The increase of God's government in our generation

Personal Prayer Needs:

(Allow time for group members to share and pray for one another)

Closing Thought

"For this cause was the Son of God manifest: to destroy and undo the works of the devil. We're not just average people if we're Christians. We actually have something, someone present in us. Christ in you is the hope of glory. It's the hope of a lost world."

How will you live this week as someone in whom Jesus dwells—as hope for a broken world?

Discussion Questions – God with Us

How does viewing Christmas as a 'declaration of war' against the devil's kingdom change your perspective on the holiday and your role in God's redemptive plan?

In what ways have you experienced God's transformative work in your life, demonstrating that you are 'not where you used to be' even if you're 'not where you're going to be'?

What does it mean to you personally that Jesus came 'to undo and destroy the works of the devil,' and how does this purpose manifest in your daily battles?

How can the prophecy in Jeremiah 31:16-17 about Rachel's children returning from the land of the enemy bring comfort to those grieving losses during the Christmas season?

Like John the Baptist who was 'in the wilderness until the day of his manifestation,' what might God be preparing you for during seasons of waiting or hardship?

What does it mean that creation is 'eagerly waiting for the revealing of the sons of God,' and how does this elevate your understanding of your purpose?

How can the practice of 'going before others'—putting their needs ahead of your own—reveal Jesus to people in practical, everyday situations?

In what ways do you see yourself as a participant rather than a spectator in God's ongoing work of redemption in the world?

How does understanding that 'the increase of His government and peace will have no end' give you hope and confidence in turbulent times?

What specific role or 'portion' do you believe God has appointed you to play in advancing His kingdom, and how can you faithfully steward that calling?

Scriptures – Scriptures – God with Us

Explicitly Mentioned References:

1. **Mark 4:39-41** - "What manner of man is this? That even the wind and the sea obey him"
2. **1 John 3:1-8** - Children of God, becoming like Jesus, destroying the works of the devil
3. **Matthew 2:17-18** - Herod's slaughter of children, Rachel weeping
4. **Jeremiah 31:15-17** - Original prophecy of Rachel weeping, promise of return
5. **Isaiah 9:2-7** - People in darkness see light, "unto us a child is born"
6. **Luke 1:67-80** - Zacharias's prophecy about John the Baptist
7. **Romans 8:18-19** - Sufferings not worthy to compare, creation awaits revealing of sons of God
8. **Hebrews 10:12-13** (alluded to) - Christ sat down, waiting until enemies become footstool

Additional References Alluded To:

9. **John 10:10** - "The thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy"
10. **Colossians 1:27** - "Christ in you, the hope of glory"
11. **2 Corinthians 5:17** - "New creation" concept
12. **Romans 10:9-10** - "Believe in your heart and confess with your mouth"
13. **1 Corinthians 15:26** - "The last enemy is death"
14. **Luke 15:11-32** (alluded to) - Prodigal son story

Devotional – God with Us

5-Day Devotional: Christmas as a Declaration of War

Day 1: The Purpose of His Coming

Reading: 1 John 3:1-8

Devotional: "For this purpose the Son of God was revealed, that He might destroy the works of the devil." Christmas wasn't just a peaceful nativity scene—it was heaven's declaration of war against everything that has stolen from humanity. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, God invaded enemy territory with a rescue mission. The devil knew a king had arrived to overthrow his kingdom, which is why Herod tried to eliminate the threat. Today, reflect on this: Jesus didn't come merely to make you comfortable; He came to set you free from every work of the enemy in your life. What areas of bondage—whether addiction, fear, or hopelessness—need His liberating power today?

Application: Identify one "work of the devil" in your life (anxiety, bitterness, destructive habits) and declare Jesus's authority over it today.

Day 2: Transformation Through Seeing Him

Reading: 1 John 3:2-3; 2 Corinthians 3:18

Devotional: "When we see Him as He is, we shall be like Him." The Christian life isn't about trying harder to be good—it's about gazing at Jesus until His image transforms us. You're not where you used to be, and you're not yet where you're going. That's the journey. Like looking in a mirror that slowly changes your reflection, spending time with Jesus changes you from the inside out. Don't be discouraged by slow progress. The prodigal's father ran to meet him while he was still far off. Jesus meets you where you are, not where you think you should be. Keep your eyes fixed on Him, and transformation will follow naturally through His love.

Application: Spend 10 minutes today simply reading about Jesus in the Gospels, asking Him to reveal Himself to you more clearly.

Day 3: Hope Beyond the Wilderness

Reading: Jeremiah 31:15-17; Luke 1:67-80

Devotional: "Refrain your voice from weeping...they shall come back from the land of the enemy." Rachel wept for her children, inconsolable because they were no more. But God's prophecy didn't end with death—it promised resurrection and restoration. If you've lost someone in this spiritual war we're in, if Christmas feels bitter because of absence, hear God's word: "Stop crying. They're coming back from the land of the enemy." The last enemy is death, and Jesus has defeated it. Like John the Baptist growing strong in the wilderness until his time of revealing, your season of hiddenness is preparation, not punishment. God sees you. He's fashioning you for purpose even when circumstances feel barren.

Application: If you're grieving, write a prayer acknowledging your pain but declaring your hope in God's promise of restoration and reunion.

Day 4: Delivered to Serve Without Fear

Reading: Luke 1:67-75; Romans 8:18-23

Devotional: "That we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear." Zacharias prophesied that God's purpose wasn't just to save us FROM something, but FOR something—fearless service. Creation itself is groaning, waiting for the revealing of God's sons and daughters. You're not a spectator in God's story; you're a participant. Just as John was hidden in the wilderness until his unveiling, you're being prepared for your moment of manifestation. The sufferings of this present time aren't worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed IN you—not just TO you, but THROUGH you to a watching world. You have a role to play in destroying the devil's works.

Application: Ask God today: "What is my role in Your kingdom purposes? How do You want to reveal Yourself through me?"

Day 5: Going Before Others

Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7; Matthew 25:31-40

Devotional: "For unto us a Child is born...of the increase of His government there will be no end." Christmas celebrates what God has done (a child WAS born), what He's doing now (a son IS given, government on His shoulders), and what He will do (the increase of His government). Jesus has paid for you; now freely give what you've freely received. In a dog-

eat-dog world, going before others—putting them first, serving sacrificially—reveals Jesus. It might be as simple as paying for someone's coffee or as costly as forgiving a deep wound. Christ in you is the hope of glory—the hope of a lost world. You're not average; you're born-again, carrying Someone powerful within you. Let His love overflow today.

Application: Intentionally "go before" someone today—let them ahead in line, pay for their order, serve them unexpectedly—and watch how it opens doors to reveal Jesus.

Closing Prayer: *Father, thank You that Christmas was Your declaration of war against everything that has held us captive. As we celebrate Jesus's birth, help us remember we're not just looking back at history but living in the ongoing story of Your kingdom advancing. Strengthen us in our wilderness seasons, remind us of our purpose, and embolden us to reveal Your love to a broken world. In Jesus's name, Amen.*