Winning What's Won — Delivery Transcript

Revelation 12:7–17 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, February 6, 2022 · *Kingdoms in Conflict*

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Well thanks to Crystal and the team for leading us this morning. They did a tremendous job, and thank you all for singing loud and singing like you believe it. If you have your Bibles, you can open them to the book of Revelation. We're in Revelation chapter 12 this morning. As we pick back up in our journey through this great book of the Bible, the book that they always told me when I was a young Christian, don't read that one first. So it's not the first book I preach, that's for sure.

But I don't think it's great advice to not read the book of the Revelation when you're young as a Christian. It's one of the best books of the Bible and really paints a powerful picture of the triumph of Christ over all things. And in a world full of trouble, we need to be reminded that Jesus wins and that we win because we are with the winner. We are in the Lord. And so we're at a we were at a stopping point in the book of Revelation. So we took a break for a long time there during Advent in the first couple of weeks of the year.

Now we're jumping back in a section of the book of the Revelation where John kind of presses the pause button on the sequence of events, and he kind of says, hey, come back behind the scenes and let me show you what's going on up in the air in kind of a cosmic sense and how that informs some of these historical events that are taking place on the earth, whether they're historical events in the past or historical events yet to be historized in the future, if that's a word. And so it's a really interesting chapter of the book of the Revelation, and it's chock full of what's called apocalyptic imagery.

So two things. If you're new today, two things you need to know. Number one, the reason we're even talking about this chapter of the Bible is because I do what's called expository preaching. Where we pick a book of the Bible and we go through it line by line, word by word, verse by verse, and all that. That means we tackle passages that I would probably not

pick on my own. Like if I was in the candy store picking out a candy sermon, I wouldn't but pick this piece of candy because it tastes terrible.

It takes a long time to eat. And it's very complicated. But we do that because I believe the scriptures are the word of God. Every word is helpful and profitable, inspired by God And sometimes the Lord knows what's relevant more than we do. And it may be that the Lord uses this morning's message to speak to you in a powerful way and changes your life. And it's not because it was a cutesy sermon, but because the Spirit of God spoke through the Word of God. That's my conviction theologically, and that's why we that's why we're doing this text today.

The second thing you need to know about today's text is it's what's called apocalyptic literature, which means he's going to use pictures and symbols and metaphors to communicate truth. And we're used to hearing truth in kind of plain spoken English or you know, normal vocabulary, kind of a didactic A B C or A plus B equals C or whatever the case may be. Two plus two equals four. This is not that. This is very poetic. And getting crazy in some ways. If you weren't here last week, which this is the continuation of last week's message, in chapter twelve verses one to six we're introduced to the cast of characters.

Three major characters, there's a pregnant woman who has a child who is the second main character. That child rules all the nations with an iron rod, and then that child is tr is opposed by this third character who is a fiery red dragon with ten heads and ten seven no no seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his head. And so it's just a crazy imagery of You know, that doesn't make a lot of sense in some ways and it's easy to get lost in the weeds and what are the heads and what are the crowns and why is he a dragon and all that stuff.

And I don't want us to get lost in those weeds, but I do want you to know who the characters represent. And we did this last week and I don't want to go over the same territory. So just for the sake of kind of pretending like you'd heard it last week the dragon is defined in the chapter later on. The dragon is referred to as Satan, so we know who the dragon is. The child is very clearly a reference to Jesus Christ, who was born, lived and died on the cross, was buried, and three days later God raised him from the dead, and he ascended into heaven.

So the child being born and ascending up to the throne of God, that's a reference to the work of Jesus on the earth. And ascending to heaven after he died. And then we said last week that the woman was representative of the people of Israel. Specifically that messianic community in Israel, a Jewish community, but a messianic community that was awaiting the birth of the Messiah, and that when the Messiah was born, they believed on Jesus for who he said he was. And exercise faith in him. And we said that the dragon, Satan, was first trying to thwart God ever bringing the Messiah into the world, but that after the Messiah did come into the world, he was trying to destroy the Messiah himself.

And so he tried to have Jesus killed when he was a baby. We see the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. And when he couldn't destroy the child, he comes and he attacks the woman, which is that early messianic community, and that's who the woman represents. All of that to say, the main point of the chapter and really the main point of the whole Bible, for sure the book of the Revelation, is that there are two kingdoms that are diametrically opposed to one another. That are in conflict, and we as God's people are in the middle of that conflict.

And you feel this in your day-to-day life. You may not feel like there's some cosmic war going on and you know you don't see dead people or ghosts or anything like that. But you would say, there are things in my life I cannot explain outside of some kind of metaphysical spiritual force seeking to undermine what's going on in my life. So know that there are two kingdoms. They're warring against each other. We as God's people are caught up in the middle of that battle. And when you know that about your life, you know that about the war that's going on around you, then you will live differently.

So if you're taking notes, first line, we're caught in the middle. We're simultaneously objects of Satan's rage and God's protection or provision. The second thing we're going to see from this passage, and what I hope you take away with you today, is that the only way to really win against the opposition of your enemy is to learn to fight from a place of victory instead of defeat. As we sang about early on, I'm going to receive a victory, not because I'm all awesome and I've got the best tools and all those things, but because the battle belongs to the Lord.

He's already won the battle. All that's left is to run out the clock. And when you watch a football game that you already know the score to, you watch the football game differently. When you watch a movie you've already seen before, you watch the movie differently. And when you engage in spiritual warfare, recognizing the battle belongs to the Lord, then you will fight differently and you will understand why Satan does some of the things that he does. In your life. So let's let's pick it up. It's verse seven if you're to give you a little context in verse six it said the woman who was the people of Israel she fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God to be nourished for 1260 days.

I think that 1,260 days could include the final three and a half years, or probably does include the final three and a half years before Jesus comes, but that John's using it here. In a bigger sense to describe the to describe our day and age. Anything between the ascension of Jesus to his second coming. And so that's what this battle includes. So it says in verse 7 A war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels also fought, but he, the dragon, could not prevail, and there was no place for them in heaven any longer.

So the great dragon was thrown out, the ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the one who deceives the whole world, he was thrown to the earth and his angels with him. And then I heard a loud voice in heaven say, the salvation and the power and the kingdom of

our God and the authority of his Christ have now come, because the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been thrown down. They, God's people, conquered him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony, because they did not love their lives to the point of death therefore rejoice you heavens and you who dwell in them.

Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you with great fury, because he knows his time is short. And so the best way, if you're taking notes, the best way to win against Satan's schemes in your own life is to fought to fight him as though the battle has already been won. Title of the message is winning What's won. And I hope you'll know that this talk of Satan and demons and spiritual warfare. While most people in our culture would probably say that's crazy talk, there's no reason to believe in some spiritual realm like that.

All that is nature. That's all there is, was, ever will be I hope at least for the sake of argument you will suspend your doubt long enough to actually look at why some of the things happen the way that they happen on the earth, why some of the things happen the way they happen in your life. Some of the things you tell yourself when you look in the mirror, some of the feelings that you feel that you think are not normal to yourself. I don't normally think this way, I don't normally act this way.

What's going on in my life. I hope you'll at least be open to the concept that it could be spiritual warfare in your life and in fact the schemes of Satan playing out in your life for marriage or whatever the case may be. So learning to fight from a place of victory under two headings. Number one, understand the opposition. Number two, embrace a winning strategy. Understanding the opposition really plays out in verses seven to nine. You got this war in heaven. It talks about Michael, this archangel, who we're not going to get all tied up in angelology, but Michael is oftentimes mentioned in the Old Testament as an archangel, a protector of the people of Israel.

So it's not surprising to see Michael, this archangel, kind of protecting Israel in this battle to preserve the coming of Messiah or the accomplishing. Of the Messiah's work on the cross. So Michael's fighting with his angels, and then you have Satan and his demons. They're fighting against him. Ultimately the dragon is unsuccessful in overcoming Michael and his archangel, so the dragon is cast out of heaven. And he's thrown down to the earth. The big question, of course, is, what is this battle? When did it take place? And there's not a lot of agreement on that.

I think it's a pretty simple answer to this question. I think this battle took place during a certain set of historical events. And those historical events was the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I'm going to show you why I believe that. But others look at this battle and they say, no, no, no, that's a reference to some future battle at the end

of days when right before Jesus comes back is kind of tied up into the battle of Armageddon and Gog and Magog and we're going to talk about all that later on down the road.

Doesn't that sound fun? Others would say, no, this is before all that. This is this is like before Satan fell. This is how Satan fell, and him, him and his demons. This is pre-garden. This is this is ancient, ancient, ancient battle. I don't think either one of those are the case. I think it's a representative, it's a heavenly battle that took place during the historical events of Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. And here's why I say that. If you're taking notes, the cross of Christ removes Satan's access to the court of heaven.

I want to show you this not only in Revelation, where we just read it, but three other places. Jesus talks about this in John chapter 12, verse 31. He's talking about his death on the cross. He's saying, I've got to go to the cross, I'm going to have to die. And in doing so, it will be the judgment on this world. Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. So he, Jesus, links his death on the cross with Satan being cast out of heaven.

Colossians chapter 2, the whole book of Colossians is kind of painting this majestic picture of Jesus, but in chapter 2 it talks about the work of Jesus on the cross. And as he's talking about the cross, he says that through the cross, he, Jesus, disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly. He triumphed over them in him. Now if you read it N I V it says in it, I think that's the best translation because he's talking about the cross. He's saying that through the cross Jesus disarmed and humiliated the authorities and principalities or the rulers and authorities, which is descriptive of these spiritual powers that are at work in the world, not like Caesar ruler in authority, not like the president ruler in authority, but Satan and demons rulers and authorities.

This dark principalities and powers were disarmed and disgraced through the cross of Jesus Christ. And then finally, Hebrews chapter 2, verse 14 says, since the children have flesh and blood, and since since children have flesh and blood in common, Jesus also shared in these, so that through his death on the cross, he might destroy the one holding the power of death, that is the devil. So there you have three, and I could show you this at several different other places in the New Testament. A link between the death of Jesus on the cross and the destruction of the devil.

Now we know the devil's not completely destroyed because he's still active. We saw that just in the book of the Revelation. But something significant happened when Jesus died on the cross. Jesus did not just die in our place for our sins. It did not just secure our forgiveness. And all that stuff, I believe that. The substitutionary death of Jesus, absolutely gospel, important truth. But something else happened on the cross. Something happened in heaven A spiritual battle was taking place in heaven as Jesus was making his way to the cross. And so as you see Jesus struggling in the Garden of Gethsemane, and he's his father, is this your will?

Is it not your will? He's being tempted by the devil that's symbolic of that spiritual battle that's taking place in heaven, this tug of war, to try to get Jesus to balk at the cross, to try to get Jesus to not do what the Father had plainly called him to do. Maybe it's even bigger than that. Maybe it's that entire ministry of Jesus, this war in heaven was going on. But as soon as Jesus does what the Father called him to do, as soon as he dies on the cross, Satan and his demons are defeated in a final, full, powerful way, and he's cast out of heaven never to return.

Now some of you say, well I thought ge I thought Satan fell like a long time ago. Well he did fall a long time ago, but he ought he had access to heaven. You see this in the book of job. Satan comes up to the court of heaven and he's accusing job in front of the Lord. Job only loves you because you made him rich and gave him a lot of stuff. After the death of Jesus on the cross, Satan can no longer come. To the throne room of God's grace and condemn us before the Lord.

He can no longer accuse us because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross. That's what this spiritual battle represents, I think that's when it takes place. And that's why Satan is now fighting from a place of defeat and not victory. If you're taking notes, the s the sphere of Satan's schemes have been restricted. They've been shrunken down. He has a limited amount of space now. He's he's n he's no longer granted access to heaven, he's only given access to earth. Less amount of space, and he has a less amount of time.

If you read in chapter 12, verses 10 and 12. Do I have that up on there? So the accuser, Satan, the accuser of our brothers and sisters who accuses him before our God day and night, he's been thrown down. So Satan can't accuse us before God's throne. And now he says in verse 12, Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you with great fury, because he knows his time is short. So Satan's rage has actually increased, and the reason his rage has increased is because he knows he's lost.

He knows his time is short. And so he's basically a defeated foe. Who knows his demise is near, and so he's going to try to wreak as much havoc and cause as much damage as he possibly can before that day comes does that make sense? So imagine if you were hog hunting, for those of you who like hog hunting, and you corner some big monster boar. He knows he has a limited amount of space. He knows he has a limited amount of time. How many of you are going to wait very long before you shoot that boar?

You're not going to wait very long at all, because he's about to go crazy on you. He's like Buck wild as they say. It's about to get real in your life. That's what a cornered predator does, and that's what Satan is doing on the earth right now because he knows he has a limited amount of space and a limited amount of time. Now that changes the way he fights. Before the cross, Satan's scheme was to thwart the coming of Messiah. After the cross, his plan is to just make us miserable.

To make you miserable, to make you miserable in your Christian life, to make you miserable in your co in your a job, to make you miserable in your marriage, to make you miserable as a parent, to do an anything in his power to sow enough lies and deceit and deception and confusion and chaos to make you miserable so that you're no longer effective in advancing the kingdom of God. So you need to understand that if you want to be effective, he knows he can't win, so that changes the way He fights.

Even though he can't accuse you before God's throne, he can cause you to doubt yourself. He can cause you to choose a life of sin instead of a life of joyful obedience to the Lord. He can cause you to isolate yourself instead of surrounding yourself with a community of f faith that wants to support you and encourage you. He can cause you to separate yourself from that. I don't have time for that. I don't want to be a part of that. He can cause you to be fearful and silent when you're given an opportunity to share the gospel or to speak the truth.

He can tempt you to be undisciplined with your time and your emotional energy so that you're always exhausted and you're always overwhelmed and you always feel like you're overworked. Because of some patterns, some choices that God didn't cause it. It's not as though Satan temp talked God into doing that in your life. It's just you and him in the mirror. And those those tapes that you play in your head and those thoughts that you kind of harbor on, that's the lies and the deception of the enemy to get you off the field.

Even though he can't stop the advancing of the gospel, he can sow confusion and cultural chaos into the institutions of our society. You think about our cultural institutions, our big things in our culture that make the culture. There are masterful lies and deception, I think, woven in over long periods of time by Satan. To create a maximum level of confusion in our young people and even us today. We've been discipled by the culture and a lot of the lies of the enemy. So that he can cause confusion and chaos. He uses guilt and shame to sink us into pits of despair.

He uses distractions and diversions to make us so busy that we're indifferent to the things of God and the glory of Christ and he uses pleasure in human appetites so that we will gorge our soul on junk food instead of what it truly craves. All of those things. It's not just that you're undisciplined. It's not just that you're, you know, watching too much Netflix or whatever the case may be. It's not just that. It's that you have an enemy who is actively promoting those kinds of things in your life. And if you don't recognize that, his goal is not to win.

He can't destroy you, but he can make you ineffective He can make you miserable, and that's his MO. That's what he's attempting to do. And when you recognize that, you will begin to see it in your life, and it will change the way you fight. Now how does Satan go about it? He goes about it through two specific ways in this passage. You might call them Satan's tool set. He uses deception and accusation in your life to take you off the field. Deception and

accusation. And when it comes to deception, usually the way it goes is Satan will take a lie, a big, juicy, destructive lie, and he will wrap it with little threads of truth.

Big lie, wrap it with some truth, so that the big lie is kind of hidden underneath the true truths. And you embrace that morsel of deception because it looks like a truth, but as soon as you bite into it, the lie infects your heart and your soul. You took it looked good, it looked reasonable, it looked like something worthy of my attention. I received it into my life, and now it's poisoning me with the deception of the devil. And you've all had seasons of your life, I know I certainly have, where something that didn't look so bad on the surface, given enough time and enough of doing that in my life, it resulted in slavery to sin and shame and misery.

Other things that he'll do is he'll take a truth, a good truth, an important core truth, but he'll wrap it with a lot of lies and deception. And you'll think to yourself, well I know that's not right and that's not right and that's not right, but underneath all that there's a good noble agenda there. And I maybe don't agree with everything that person says. I don't agree with everything that thing's about, but it but there are some good things I can get on board with. And so you jump on board, you receive it into your life.

And eventually over a long enough period of time the truth that was there kind of just fades and all you're left with is the lie. And we could get super particular on this. This is how a lot of people talk themselves into adultery. This is how a lot of people talk themselves into pornography addictions or any kind of addiction of, you know, substance abuse, alcohol. This is how some of you got talked into Having a group of friends that, though they're a lot of fun and they're made in the image of God and maybe even believers, they have They've talked you into developing lifestyle patterns and things that are destructive to your faith and they're keeping you enslaved to sin.

It's how the devil works. He's a masterful, masterful deceiver. A Bible says he masquerades as an angel of light. And so it doesn't he never shows you his ugly he never shows you his ugly self up front always the pretty self up front. But as soon as you take the bait, as soon as you bite into that morsel of deception, then he turns the tables and he becomes your accuser. And he says, how can anybody ever love somebody like you? How could you ever be forgiven given the things that you do?

You've been struggling with this sin for fourteen years, and yet you present yourself as a godly man or a godly woman. Who would ever. How could anybody ever love you? How will you ever be married? How will you ever be married again given the things that have happened in your life? All of those accusations, accusations, accusations after he's deceived you He deceived you enough you bite the hook and then as soon as you find some guilt and shame in your life, he goes to town on your guilt and your shame until you're crippled, you're off the gate, you're off the field.

Sure you're a Christian, you're going to heaven when you die, you believe in Jesus mostly. But you're crippled with guilt and shame. You're unproductive in the kingdom of God because Satan, through his through deception and accusation, has destroyed you. He can't take you to hell. He can't cause you to lose your salvation. But he can do maximum damage before Jesus comes again. Okay, that's his MO, that's how he works. That's what he's doing in your life right now. So how do you overcome him? How do you embrace this winning strategy that John talks about?

Well, in general, you've got to learn to fight from a place of victory instead of defeat. You've got to live as if the battle truly does belong to the Lord and the victory has already been won. This may sound like self-help mumbo jumbo or Oprah, Church of Oprah junk. Positive power of positive thinking. That's not what I'm talking about. Okay, it's not you overcoming your problems with your self-effort or your willpower or your amazing mojo in your mind or whatever. The secret, you know. It's taking the truth of the gospel and deeply believing it to the point that it revolutionizes the way you think about your struggles in life.

And you see it summarized really in chapter 12, verse 11. He talks about how God's people overcame the devil. We overcame him. We conquered him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not love their lives even to the point of death. Some of you read that and go, well, I don't even have a lamb, and if I did, I don't want to kill it. You know, I don't want the blood of the lamb. That's not what he's talking about. It's a throwback, okay, to Old Testament sacrificial system.

They would sacrifice a lamb. And it was because in the Old Testament God basically made this system in which without the shedding of blood there could be no forgiveness of sins. And so what they would do, what Israel would do on the day of Atonement, once a year, they would sacrifice a bull and a goat and bring their blood into, you know, the Holy of Holies.[1] And it was through the shedding of that blood that sins would be atoned for. They would be postponed. You also have this in the Exodus narrative when they would take the blood of the lamb and they would put it on the doorpost of their house that the death angel would pass over that house because they were covered by the blood of the lamb.

That's what John's talking about. So he's essentially saying Jesus is the lamb. The death of Jesus on the cross is the blood you put over your life. And when you put his blood over your life, then the death angel passes over you. The wages of sin is death. Those those wages are now passed over you. Instead of death, you receive life. Instead of condemnation, you receive forgiveness. Instead of guilt and shame, you receive God's love and acceptance. That's the blood of the lamb. And he's saying, take that gospel truth that Jesus died in my place for my sin and apply it to your life.

Don't live under the guilt and the shame and the accusations that the enemy cast your way over and over again. But instead overcome those accusations with the truth of the gospel.

Which is interesting because in one way you're agreeing with the devil, right? You're saying, devil, you're right. I have done those things. I did live in slavery to that sin. I am way worse off than even you are describing. It's far worse than that. It's far worse than I can imagine. But it's accompanying that condemnation, that awareness of sin with the truth of the gospel, that God loved me so much that he sent his son into the world to die for my sin.

And that whoever would believe on Christ would not perish but have everlasting life, that nothing can separate me from the love of Christ n not anything that I do, not anything people will do to me. So Satan, throw the accusations you want to throw. You can tell me I'm a bad mom, you can tell me I'm a bad husband, you can tell me I'm a bad employee or a bad boss. You can run me to the ground. But my identity isn't based in who I am or what I've done in the past or what I will do in the future.

My identity is based on who Jesus was for me. He lived the life I couldn't live. He died the death I should have died. And my identity is rooted squarely and firmly in who he is for me and not in who I am without him. When you do that, when you apply the gospel to your life, your life will change. You will be a totally different person and you will be effective against the schemes of the devil. You will become a much more humble person. You will become a much more forgiving person.

You become a much more patient person. You'll be joyful because your identity isn't rooted in things that change or things that you have to keep up in order to have a good image. But it's based on who God says you are through Christ. So apply the gospel to your life. That's the first thing. The second thing is to display the gospel with your, or I'm sorry, to proclaim the gospel with your words. And then the third thing is to display the gospel no matter what. And when it comes to proclaiming the gospel, this is what he's talking about, the word of your testimony.

He's not saying how you became a Christian. He's saying why you became a Christian. I became a Christian because Jesus died for me, and three days later God raised him from the dead. My testimony is the gospel. So as you proclaim the gospel in the world, you're destroying the work of Satan, not only in your life, but in your family, in your sphere of influence in our city as we proclaim the gospel we're destroying the work of Satan. Political victories are wonderful. You know I'm a political kind of guy. I love winning elections.

Not that I actually win them, but I love to be on the winning team I think you can legislate morality in a lot of ways. You know, some say you can't legislate morality. I think we do it all the time. You can make people behave a certain way with a strict enough law and a steep enough fine. But that won't change their heart and that won't change our culture. The only thing that changes our heart and our culture is the Spirit of God through the gospel. And so as we preach the gospel and proclaim the gospel, that's what thwarts the plan of the enemy.

So you apply it to your life, you preach it with your words, and then you display it, no matter what. So even if they take your life, you can't even really do that because you can destroy the body, but God gives the soul. Even if they malign you, speak evil against you, even if it costs you your family and your friends, no matter what it costs, you say, I'm going to follow Jesus. Because of the good news of the gospel. Whatever I may lose in this world, it's nothing compared to what I gain in Jesus Christ.

I'd rather have Jesus than anything this world affords to give. So those are the offensive strategies. Apply the gospel to your life, preach the gospel with your words, and then display the gospel no matter what. What I want us to close on is these defensive strategies that are in verses 13 to 17. We don't have a lot of time to discuss this. But let's read what happens after the war in heaven is lost, Satan is cast to the earth. What does he do while he's on the earth? He says that when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who had given birth to the male child.

So that represents the people of Israel. Think of those early Jewish apostles. They're now being persecuted by Satan because they had given birth to the Messiah. They were preaching the gospel. As they're being persecuted, verse fourteen says the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, so that she could fly from the serpent's presence to her place in the wilderness, where she was nourished for a time, times, and half a time that's a reference to three and a half years, just like verse six. Time, one year, times, two and three, and then half a time, three and a half.

From his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river flowing after the woman to sweep her away with a flood. But the earth helped the woman. The earth opened up its mouth and swallowed up the river that the dragon had spewed from his mouth. Now we have four minutes to talk about all of that crazy. And again, it's apocalyptic imagery, okay? So don't get lost in the weeds. People say, what is the water? And how does the earth swallow the water? And you know, there's so many different theories and options.

I'm not even going to address it, but I do want to tell you where he's getting them from. All of those things are pulled from the Exodus. If you remember the Charlton Heston movie, the Exodus, let My people Go. God delivered Israel from slavery to Pharaoh in Egypt through the Exodus. John's already been alluding to the Exodus with the blood of the lamb bit. Passing over. The death angel passed over the Israelites and he killed all of Pharaoh's Egyptian children instead. When Pharaoh finally lets the people go, what happens? The Israelites go through the wilderness.

They get to the red Sea. The Lord splits open the red Sea. And the people of Israel go through. And when that happens, the Lord actually describes that as carrying them out on eagle's wings. In Exodus chapter 19, verse 4,[2] the Lord says, I carried you, my people, on eagle's wings. Pharaoh is likened to the serpent. Pharaoh pursued them. Through the

wilderness, just like the dragons pursuing God's people through the wilderness. So much of what John is pulling from as he paints this picture is from the Exodus. And you need to know that.

Because if you go back and read the Exodus, you'll begin to see how God delivers his people. And the main point will surface. And the main point is, even in the face of insurmountable Circumstances, God is faithful to care for his people. No matter how grim it may feel, no matter how devastated you may be even though it feels like utter defeat, even in the wilderness, God is faithful to protect and to provide. That's what he did then for Israel. It's what he's going to do for us today, and it's what he will do for God's people in the future.

Now, as to the three and a half years, does that reference the three and a half years before the great Tribulation, or does it reference this entire period between the ascension of Jesus and his second coming? People have to make choices about that. I think it can actually include both. It includes the final three and a half years where the Antichrist is trying to destroy Israel and that God's people, we the church, are feeling the brunt of the Antichrist destruction because he hates us just as much as he hates them.

But either way, we know God is faithful to protect and to provide. The reason I think that it at least includes that is because of what he says in verse 17. With this we'll close. The dragon was furious with the woman, and he went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring, those who keep the commandments of God and hold firmly to the testimony about Jesus. So if the woman is Israel, or even Jewish Christians who are these people? The other brothers and sisters of the child? Well, that would be you and me.

Non-Jewish, you might say the church even. So you have this early messianic community, and it was through their preaching of the gospel that the church was born. And it includes Jews and Gentiles, it includes all of those people. Who are not represented in that woman, that true Israel. Whatever group you find yourself in, you are an object of Satan's rage, but you're also an object of God's protection and provision. And so for you, the best defensive strategy you have available is to walk by faith and trust the Lord. High tides, low tides, I'm going to trust the Lord.

Whether it makes sense or doesn't make sense, I'm going to trust the Lord. I come into church on a day like today, I've got incredible baggage, I've got a heart that is heavy, I don't see a way forward but I'm going to trust the Lord. The author of Lamentations talks about how his soul is cast down within him. The bitterness, the wormwood, the gall, I've lost my hope in the Lord, but this I call to mind, and therefore I do have hope. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end.

They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. And God, because you're faithful, because you were faithful then, because you were faithful then, I'm going to trust you to be

faithful today, and I'm going to trust you to be faithful in the future, and I'm going to walk by faith. That's the best defensive weapon you have available to you to keep you in the game. So apply the gospel to your life. Proclaim the gospel with your words. Display the gospel no matter what and take up the shield of faith. To extinguish the fiery darts of the evil one as he comes against you to not end you, not destroy you, but to make you absolutely miserable.

Until the day of his demise. You do not have to let him win. You can win the battle when you fight from a place of what's already been won. Fight from a place of victory. I know that it's easy for me to say, it's hard for you to do. And so if there's something you want to pray about, maybe you want to pray for yourself down here at the front, the altar's open. You can right there where you're seated respond to the Lord. If you're here this morning and you're not a Christian or if you're watching online and you and you're not a believer and you want to be someone who's in the Lord, you want to have that victory won for you because you know you can't win it for yourself, then you can scan the QR code or you can go to broadview.life/next and let us help you take your next step.

But let's respond to the Lord. Father, we thank you for this time. We thank you for the reality of your victory over Satan and over his demons and over every obstacle that we will face in this life. It's so easy to get discouraged. Because the truth is our enemy is cunning and crafty and he's effective. He's effective at telling us what we well, we can't refute. He's so skilled at accusation and deception. So would you give us wisdom to know the difference between truth and error. Would you give us the grace to take the truth of a of the cross and know how to apply it to our life and our relationships with our spouses, with our children.

Guide us into seasons of triumph over the enemy instead of defeat. I pray for that person who right now is suffering from depression and mental illness and much of that is a result of walking in shame and accusation year after year after year, and they need to hear a better word. They need to hear that they are loved, they need to hear that they can be forgiven, that they are accepted. You are with them, you are not against them. So would you, Holy Spirit, take those great gospel truths and open up our eyes so that we can see, our ears so that we can hear, and our hearts so that we can obey what you're calling us to do.

And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "they would bring a lamb into the Holy of Holies, they would sacrifice that lamb … the blood of the lamb"; on the Day of Atonement the high priest sacrificed a bull and a male goat and brought their blood inside the curtain to the mercy seat (Leviticus 16:11–15); a lamb was not the Day of Atonement sacrifice. Source: Leviticus 16:11–15 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "Exodus chapter 19, verse 14"; the "eagles' wings" verse is Exodus 19:4 ("how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself"). Source: Exodus 19:4 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩