

## Sermon 2, Kill the Dragon, Get the Girl, Revelation 12

Scripture Reading: Gen. 3; sing Ps. 45

- I. The Dragon Kills Adam, Gen. 3:1-18
  - A. The Dragon Attacks Eve, Gen. 3:1-7
  - B. Adam Fails to Stop the Dragon, Gen. 3:7c
  - C. God Confronts the Man, the Woman, and the Dragon, Gen. 3:8-19
- II. God's Promise to Crush the Dragon, Gen. 3:15
- III. Christ Conquers the Dragon
  - A. The Dragon Attacks the Church, Rev. 12
  - B. Christ Attacks and Defeats the Dragon, John 12:31
  - C. Christ Casts the Dragon into Hell, Rev. 20:10
  - D. Christ Claims His Bride, Rev. 19:5-9. 21:9

**Proposition:** The imagery under which Christ's work is presented allows us to summarize the Bible story with the phrase "Kill the dragon, get the girl!"

Dearly beloved brothers and sisters, last week we discussed what the Bible is: a record of God's dealings with His people, one that particularly focuses on the role of Jesus Christ as the Mediator between God and His people. The Bible is a history book. But how can we sum up the history which it relates? What is the content of the cosmic story that sprawls from Genesis to Revelation? Today, I want to show you that one good way to summarize this story is by the phrase "Kill the dragon, get the girl." Both Adam and Christ had the task of dragon-slaying so they could protect their bride. Adam failed in this task; he stood by and let his bride be the guinea pig on whom the dragon practiced his wiles. Christ, as we know, succeeded in this task, effectively conquering the dragon through His death, resurrection, and ascension in power to the throne of God. From this, in turn, men, you can and should learn to drive away the dragon and protect your wives and daughters! We can all learn to praise, magnify, love and glorify Jesus Christ, our great dragon-slaying champion, whose bride we corporately are.

### I. The Dragon Kills Adam, Gen. 3:1-18

We turn first to the story of the fall of man in Genesis 3. Here, in the first part of v. 1, we meet the serpent. Now, you may be wondering why I insist on calling this serpent a dragon. Here's why: Revelation 12:9 tells me that this was a dragon, *the* dragon. "So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Rev 12:9 NKJ). We just read that a moment ago. According to John, Satan, alias the Devil, alias the serpent who appeared at the beginning, is depicted in Rev. 12 as a dragon.

In English, too, the word "wyrn" or "worm" is synonymous with the word "dragon." You may remember some famous dragons in the writings of J.R.R. Tolkien. He calls Smaug a

“worm” at times, and he also calls Glaurung and Ancalagon the Black both dragons and worms (see the name index in *The Silmarillion*). Notice his other quote too: "A dragon is no idle fancy. Whatever may be his origins, in fact or invention, the dragon in legend is a potent creation of men's imagination, richer in significance than his barrow is in gold. Even to-day (despite the critics) you may find men not ignorant of tragic legend and history, who have heard of heroes and indeed seen them, who yet have been caught by the fascination of the worm."<sup>1</sup>

Dragons aren't called “worms” on the model of earthworms, but rather on the model of serpents. Isaiah 14:29 and 30:6 both speak of what older translations call “a fiery flying serpent.” If that's not a spot-on definition of a dragon, then I don't know what is. Yes, rationalizing modern translations like the NIV take the word “flying” and translate it as “darting,” but the word “flying” is generally used of birds. Make no mistake: a serpent, even a common ordinary rattlesnake, is different only in degree from a true dragon.

#### **A. The Dragon Attacks Eve, Gen. 3:1-7**

So when we see the serpent introduced here, I'm not trying to argue that Satan showed himself as a huge flying, fire-breathing dragon. It's possible — but it is more likely that he appeared as a common, small snake. But that doesn't change who he truly is — a dragon. Now, as you'll know if you've read what C.S. Lewis called “the right books,” talking with a dragon is extremely dangerous. But Eve did it anyway. Notice how the dragon attacked — by questioning the word of God. “Has God really said?” This is the question of the dragon in all ages. Eve should have recognized this question as the question of an enemy, and sought reinforcements. The garden was a holy place, a temple which Adam was supposed to guard. (The word “keep” in some English translations is more literally “guard.”) When the serpent directly contradicted God's word and accused God of the sin of envy, then it should have been clear that he didn't belong in the garden. Remember, envy is sorrow at another's good. Envy is being upset that someone else has a good thing. If God were envious, He would not have created everything very good!

#### **B. Adam Fails to Stop the Dragon, Gen. 3:7c**

But Adam, though he was put in the garden specifically for the purpose of guarding it, made no effort to expel the dragon. Far from it. He was right there, possibly right there the whole time, and yet he did not drive out the evil, tell the dragon to shut its lying mouth, or do anything to protect Eve. On the contrary, he let Eve be the test case. When she didn't die, he ate. In short, Adam did the exact opposite of what he was supposed to do. He was supposed to guard the garden from those who would defile it. Instead, he let the serpent walk (or fly!) right on in. He was supposed to exercise headship over his wife and protect her from outside threats. Instead, he protected himself by letting her go first into some new dangerous activity. And finally, he listened to the serpent rather than to the word of God!

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<sup>1</sup> J.R.R. Tolkien, “Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics” (1936).

Have you ever succumbed to temptation in this way? Men, have you ever failed to protect your wives like this? Have you let the Devil's lies dominate how you live? I know you have. I know I have.

### **C. God Confronts the Man, the Woman, and the Dragon, Gen. 3:8-19**

But God comes to the garden, and He confronts His creatures regarding their sin. Some of you may not like confrontation. But God is willing to confront His wicked creatures. We see that Adam and Eve knew they were guilty, because they hid from God. God cursed the serpent directly, condemning it to go on its belly. This has led some to say that it had formerly been able to walk. I think it more likely that it had been able to fly. What a difference! To go from the soaring beauty of flight to the humiliating punishment of crawling in the dust! Regardless, the serpent is cursed, condemned to eat dust just like the conquered enemy he is.

Notice what happens to Adam and Eve. Their relationship will now be difficult. Eve will desire to dominate her husband, but he will dominate her. Rather than the perfect harmony and joy which God intended to prevail between the sexes, their lives will now be marked by the sinful tendency of women to want mastery over their husbands and their husbands' sinful tendency to rule harshly over them. If anyone doubts this, a glance at poisonous relationships all over the planet will confirm that this is exactly where sinful men and women tend to go. Notice, too, that Adam's sin was eating, and that he will eat with pain from this point on. He was supposed to guard and work in the garden. But instead of that blessed existence in communion with God, now he will be cast out and forced to tend cursed ground until the day he dies.

The dragon's lies have indeed borne a horrific crop.

### **II. God's Promise to Crush the Dragon, Gen. 3:15**

But in the midst of these words of judgment, God gives an outline of history to come — and He gives hope to the human pair. Lord-willing, we're going to have an entire sermon on this passage in two weeks, so I won't steal all my own thunder now. But it's very important to see what's going on here. God will put enmity between the serpent and the woman. Remember how a few verses before they had acted like friends? Yet now they are no longer friends, but enemies. In generations to come, God will place enmity between the serpent's seed and the woman's seed. Who are the serpent's seed? They are those who are "of their father the devil," as Jesus said (John 8:44). And the woman's seed are her descendants "who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 12:17 NKJ). But the woman stands in for the progenitor of her seed, the person mysteriously referred to as a "he." He — the progenitor of the woman's seed — will bruise the Dragon's head.

This is a threat directed against the serpent, but a promise directed specifically to Eve and through her to the rest of the human race. Satan will have his head crushed. The woman's seed will regard him as an enemy, rather than listening to him as Eve did. Adam and Eve needed to believe in this coming seed, the seed who is not a "them" but a "he." And what does Eve say as soon as she bears a son in chapter 4? "I have gotten a man from the LORD."

Eve lived based on this promise! Cain was not the special seed who would crush the serpent's head, but the fact that Eve was having children was the first step toward the birth of the Messiah.

Now, you all are already Christians. I don't need to prove to you that Jesus is the fulfillment of this threat against Satan. But I think it's important that you see the Biblical evidence showing precisely this, because remember, we want to see how the whole Bible can be summarized under the title, "Kill the Dragon, get the girl!"

### **III. Christ Conquers the Dragon**

So how did Christ, the woman's singular seed, bruise the serpent's head? What did He do to conquer Satan?

#### **A. The Dragon Attacks the Church, Rev. 12**

Well, before we answer that question, we need to look at Rev. 12 more closely. In this chapter, we see a vision of how the dragon has attacked a particular woman throughout all ages of history.

John tells us that he saw a great sign in heaven. This picture points beyond itself. That's what a sign is — something that points to a greater reality.

What was the sign? A woman, clothed with sun, with moon under her feet, and a crown of 12 stars. What is this referring to? Joseph's dream, in which he saw his father and mother (Jacob and Leah) and his 11 brothers bowing down in front of him. First he saw them as sheaves of wheat — but the second time, he saw them as the sun, moon, and stars. What's the point? The point is that at that time, in Genesis 37, Jacob's family was the church on earth. They were the sum total of Israel, the sum total of everyone who worshipped and served the true God. As far as the Biblical record goes, they were the only believers on a planet filled with idol-worshippers. So this woman represents the church. We see an additional line of evidence for this interpretation by looking at the depiction of Solomon's queen in Song of Solomon 6:10: "Who is she who looks forth as the morning, Fair as the moon, Clear as the sun, Awesome as an army with banners?" (Sol 6:10 NKJ). Solomon was a type of Christ, and his bride is a type of the church. That's why the Song of Solomon is in the Bible.

Well, we are introduced to the church personified as this woman. She is in labor, crying out in pain. Confronting her appears another sign — a great, fiery red dragon with seven heads and 10 horns and seven crowns.

What's the background on this dragon? He resembles the little horn of Daniel 7 and 8, coming up and throwing down the saints and trampling on them. When I was younger, I always used to wonder how many horns each head had. Did they each have 1.43 horns? But you see, the point of the imagery in Revelation is not visual coherence. This couldn't be translated shot-for-shot onto the silver screen. Rather, the point is the *literary* meaning and *literary* allusions of John's visions. John isn't doing visual art; he's writing a *book*, and that means that we need to understand this vision as a *written document*. Seven heads is the perfect number — and this dragon is the consummate, "perfect" representative of evil and persecution. He casts down the saints and tramples on them. He prepares to devour the woman's child.

Who is this child? He is the Son of God, the King from Psalm 2 who will rule the nations with a rod of iron. Notice where He comes from: from Israel, from the OT church, which suffered from the dragon's evil attentions. Yet Christ conquers. He is caught up to God, just like that. Clearly John knew about the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Yet he moves swiftly from Christmas to Ascension Day to make clear to us that Christ's work is complete and that He is protected from the dragon at the right hand of God.

Notice what happens to the woman: she flees into the wilderness and is nourished there for 1260 days. That's forty-two months of 30 days each, or 3.5 years. Some commentators understand this taking place long after the ascension of Christ, and as a particular time when Israel or the church will be protected in the wilderness for precisely 1260 days. But though John just narrated Christ's life in a single sentence, I'm afraid that we have to label this theory the "Gap Theory." Of course, instead of postulating long periods of time between the days of Genesis 1, it postulates long periods of time between the verses of Rev. 12. But rather than embracing this gap theory, it is better to say that as soon as the church literally appears as a woman clothed with the sun confronting a literal dragon, we will begin to look for a literal fulfillment of this time period. But the whole chapter is specifically identified as a "sign" pointing to realities beyond itself, not as a video of certain events in the life of God's people.

What we need to see is that the Dragon is opposed to the church and has been standing by to harm her from the beginning. Yet Christ's victory on Earth is matched by Michael's victory in Heaven. Satan's plans have been frustrated on Earth through God's intervention to protect Christ, and that in turn means that Satan is cast out of Heaven. Was he in heaven? Not in the sense of being in the place where God has His throne. Rather, the idea is that of the "sky" or the area where angelic beings are in general. Satan has been evicted from his former place of power. Indeed, Thomas Aquinas says that the only way in which an angel can be in a place is by exercising his power there. Thus, this "casting down" of Satan is a literal way of describing how he can no longer exercise his power in the same way that he did before the life and ascension of Christ. He can still exercise power on earth, but not in the heavenly realm.

But how do we on earth kill the dragon? We overcome him by the blood of the Lamb — that is, by trusting in the work of Jesus Christ and His death in our place — and by continuing to profess the truth about Him. We must not love our earthly lives more than we love the truth of Jesus Christ. We must be willing to die, because we are part of this church which is persecuted by the Dragon.

The narrative moves on to tell us that the Dragon persecutes the woman who gave birth to the Christ. This is not just Mary; this is the entire church, the entire group of the Seed of the Woman. The Dragon persecutes all of us. He makes war on all of us. This woman is not just Israel; Israel could not be described the way that the saints of v. 17 are described, as those who have the testimony of Jesus Christ. That's precisely what ethnic Israel *doesn't* have, ever since Christ's ascension. So think of yourself as part of this woman who is the church, persecuted by the dragon and yet confident in God's saving promises.

### **B. Christ Attacks and Defeats the Dragon, John 12:31**

And yet we can overcome the Dragon now because Christ has already overcome him! Speaking of His approval by the Father and His coming crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus said that the ruler of this world would be cast out. Who is that? Satan. The Dragon. How did Christ get victory over him? By suffering and dying. Remember what we just saw in Rev. 12, too: We too will conquer the Dragon by suffering and perhaps even dying, by not loving our lives to the point of death.

So we have this one-sentence summary of the Bible: Kill the Dragon, get the girl. Jesus Christ came to fight and conquer the dragon, but he lost his own life in the process. Why should we imitate Him, knowing that to attack this Dragon is so dangerous?

1. Because the Dragon is already defeated.
2. Because we serve a God who raises the dead.

Jesus' work on the cross defeated the Dragon, cast him out from his unchecked dominion over the nations of the earth. You know, 20 centuries ago virtually every city on earth had huge idols raised at its center. People worshipped snakes and demons in the sight of the sun. Now, few of the world's cities are openly idolatrous. Yes, much evil remains in the world. Yes, the Dragon is still alive and kicking. But his power is restrained. He has been cast out of his once-proud dominion.

### **C. Christ Casts the Dragon into Hell, Rev. 20:10**

And you know what? He will undergo the second death. He will be "killed" by being cast into the lake of fire. Jesus will consummate His already-inaugurated defeat of the Dragon.

Do you see how the story has come full circle? Jesus did what Adam failed to do. Jesus guarded God's sanctuary. Jesus tracked down the serpent and cast him out and will eventually cast him into the lake of fire.

### **D. Christ Claims His Bride, Rev. 19:5-9. 21:9**

And once He's done that, He will claim His bride. The Bible ends with a wedding — the wedding of Jesus Christ with His bride, the church. This is the same woman we saw in ch. 12. In one sense, the church gave birth to Jesus; He came from among His own people. But in another sense, the church is Jesus' bride, the one whom He found lying in her blood, and to whom He said, "Live." Yes, He passed by and saw her and said "Live!"

We are Christ's "girl." He has attacked and defeated the Dragon who held us hostage, and He did it at the cost of His own life. Soon He will take us to Himself. Blessed are they that are called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb!

So from Christ's point of view, the Biblical story can be summarized as "Kill the Dragon, get the girl." That's what Adam failed to do, but what Jesus did perfectly. Our response should be to resist the Dragon, who's an already-beaten foe, and to love the Lord Jesus Christ, our rescuer and rightful husband. Can you do that? Can you adore and worship the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave His life so the Dragon could die and you could live? Amen.