

A series of FOUR sermon outlines for the Advent Season, from the Revelation of Jesus Christ to John.

*Preached at the Centurion West Presbyterian Church during the four Sundays of Advent 2009.  
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## 1. FIRST SERMON OUTLINE FROM REVELATION FOR THE ADVENT SEASON.

Revelation 1:9-20. "One Like a Son of Man"

### Introduction

Did you know that nowhere in the Gospels are we given a physical description of Jesus. Most authors would give you a description of the main characters in their books. Yet the Gospel writers nowhere tell us what Jesus physically looked like. The New Testament writers emphasise that Jesus is fully human, like us in every way except sin, but they do not give us a picture of his appearance.

But here in the Revelation John shows us a picture of the ascended Christ. He is giving us a description of the glorified Jesus. He is painting a portrait that we may see what Jesus looks like now.

John's description has a key word, without which we would misunderstand the description. The word is "like." In today's reading it is used 7 times: like a trumpet, like a son of man, like white wool, like blazing fire, like bronze, like the sound of rushing waters, like the sun. This key word is used 66 times in the entire book of Revelation.

What does "like" mean? It means John is not giving us actual descriptions, but he is telling us what the resurrected Lord of the church is like. John tells us about Christ's glory, honour, majesty and power as glorified Lord in heaven.

### 1. Suffering, Kingdom and endurance.

At the beginning of today's reading John mentions his reason for giving us a description of Christ:

*(Rev 1:9) 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.*

John describes the glorified, victorious Christ, because Christians share suffering, but also Christ's kingdom and therefore suffer with patient endurance.

Christians share in his "suffering". Jesus said the church can expect suffering, persecution, because the world hates believers in the same way as it hates Christ (Jn 15:19; 16:1-4). Paul says "everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim 3:12). Suffering for the sake of Jesus is something to be expected by believers.

The revelation of Jesus Christ was written to a persecuted church. And this church looked at the big, hostile, powerful Roman persecutors and felt completely hopeless.

But the church, the believers, also share Christ's Kingdom. John says in verse 6: Christ "has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father" (Rev 1:6). We are subjects of Jesus' Kingdom and under his authority (Col 1:13). And someday we will reign with Christ (Rev 5:10) and will be seated with him at God's right hand (Eph 2:6). Now the churches' participation in Jesus' divine authority is hard to see amidst hardship, poverty, and having no worldly influence. (Rev 2:9; 3:8).

But Christians also share in "patient endurance." We need patience and perseverance as we are caught between our suffering in this world and the eternal kingdom that is coming. When we persevere, we will have a place in the future kingdom (Rev 2:26).

Christians share suffering and patience in Jesus, but should never forget that we share in his coming, glorious and victorious Kingdom, as well. Because of Jesus and for the sake of Jesus and like Jesus we know suffering and certainly also will know victory.

On the Lord's Day the Spirit brought John into a state of prophetic understanding and John "heard behind him a loud voice like a trumpet" (Rev 1:10).

A voice like a trumpet blast signals that something important is about to happen. In this instance, the voice like a trumpet blast signals that the Spirit was giving John a message to send to the whole church in jeopardy that will enable them to endure and persevere. John mentions "seven churches" because the number "seven" - since the time of creation - signifies wholeness and completeness. The seven churches represent all the churches of Asia Minor and all churches of all times and all places.

John was commanded, "write what you see and send it .." In the Old Testament, when a prophet was commanded to write something down, the message concerned both judgment and salvation. Judgment was coming - the judgment of those who were not faithful, who did not overcome or persevere. And, salvation for the repentant people, the victorious people of God.

It is within this context that John presents to us a picture, a vision of the Lord, the Head and the King of the church.

## **2. Jesus among the 7 Lamp stands.**

"And when I turned I saw seven golden lamp stands" (Rev 1:12). John tells us at the end of the chapter that "the seven lamp stands are the seven churches" (Rev 1:20). It is the whole and complete church. Christ, the glorious Lord, is among the suffering Churches. Seven is the number of fullness and completeness. John saw the church in all her fullness. John saw a church that was catholic, apostolic and that lives for ever in all places on earth and in heaven.

"Among the lamp stands was someone "like a son of man"" (Rev 1:13). And the "son of man" had authority, glory, power and everlasting dominion. John saw the resurrected, ascended Christ present in the midst of the suffering Church.

This means Christ is the centre of his church and God's people are centred on Jesus Christ. Christ is the basis of our unity and reason for our perseverance.

The church is often seen to be weak, impure, fighting, with poor doctrine, with imperfect leaders who are man-centred, selfish and greedy. Yet, Jesus is in the midst of her. Isn't that amazing? Isn't it wonderful!

## **3. Jesus looks like the divine rescuer, Saviour of his people.**

This Jesus, who is the centre of the church, is revealed in eight details.

Firstly, Christ was "dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest" (Rev 1:13). In the OT the high priest was dressed this way in the temple as he represented the people before God and prayed for them. (Ex 28:4; 29:9). In the midst of the church John sees the "Son of Man" - a priest who sacrificed himself for our sins, yet a conquering high priest who defeats all his enemies.

Secondly: "His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow" (Rev 1:14). In Daniel 7 this is a description of God the Father. Now this description is applied to Jesus. Jesus is being recognized as God's equal. And white hair represents age. In God it represents eternity. God is the great "I AM." God is "him who is, and who was, and who is to come" (Rev 1:4). God is "the Alpha and the Omega," "the First and the Last," the beginning and the end. In the midst of the church John sees the "Son of Man" who is eternal, never ending, always the holy, almighty God.

Thirdly: "His eyes were like blazing fire" (Rev 1:14). We read a similar description in later chapters (Rev 2:18; 19:12). It speaks of the all-seeing and all-knowing eyes of Jesus. In the midst of the church John sees the "Son of Man" who sees and knows all sin, evil, faith and love and judges accordingly.

Fourthly: "His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace" (Rev 1:15). The book of Hebrews applies these words to the rule of King Jesus. Jesus is a mighty King and he places his feet on the neck of all his enemies who are on the ground before him; before him they are completely conquered. In the midst of the church John sees the "Son of Man" whose enemies are as nothing before him.

Fifthly: "His voice was like the sound of rushing waters" (Rev 1:15). - a powerful, fearful, deafening sound that inspires fear and awe. In the midst of the church John sees the "Son of Man" whose voice causes fear and awe and dread, because he is the eternal Word of a holy God.

The sixth detail is: "In his right hand he held seven stars" (Rev 1:16). The seven stars are the angels / messengers / ministers of the seven churches (Rev 1:20). Like the lamp stands, they represent the ministry of the church itself. The messengers of the whole and complete church are in the right hand of the "Son of Man." Throughout Scripture the right hand symbolizes favour, protection, power and ownership. In the midst of the church John sees the "Son of Man" holding the church, her leaders and her preachers and teachers. They, as the church, are favoured by Christ, protected by Christ, and belong to Christ.

The seventh detail is: "Out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword" (Rev 1:16). (Heb 4:12-13) For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any physical sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (13) Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. It is a Word of judgment. In the midst of the church John sees the "Son of Man" whose Word brings judgment.

The eighth detail is: "His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance (Rev 1:16). In the midst of the church John sees the "Son of Man" who is an "unapproachable light" (1 Tim 6:16). He is so brilliant, so awesome, so glorious, it hurts the eyes to be in his very presence.

Our response to this portrait of Jesus can only be like John's response: "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead" (Rev 1:17).

#### **4. He is the Jesus whose birth we will celebrate on Christmas Day.**

It is this awesome King who was born of Mary, who became one of us to save us from our sins and grant us eternal life.

This is the reason why the angels sang, the shepherds worshipped and the wise men served him with the royal gifts and honour!! Because he is Israel's great and glorious Messiah, our Lord and Saviour!

We too should fall at his feet in prostrate worship! Christmas is not a sentimental feast around a helpless babe. Christmas proclaims: The King was born! The King conquers! The King is coming! The King is coming indeed!

#### **5. He is the mighty King whom we await during the Advent season.**

He who takes away and overcomes our suffering, who makes us one with him in his Kingdom, who grants us perseverance until he returns and shares his heavenly glory with us for ever, it is his coming we await and his coming we celebrate during the advent Season!

Do not be afraid. The King that was born is called Jesus: The LORD saves!

Do not be afraid: The King that was born reigns for ever.

Do not be afraid! The King is coming! The King is coming indeed!

This is the Word of God.  
Amen.

## 2. SECOND SERMON OUTLINE FROM REVELATION FOR THE ADVENT SEASON.

Reading Revelation 5:1-10.

"A Messiah who is worthy to be worshipped and praised."

In his fascinating book, *The Wages of Spin*, Carl Truman gets at the reason why people are so caught up with entertainment. He writes,

*Distraction is the production of entertainment for the purpose of taking one's mind off the deeper realities of life.*

Both in and out of the Church, people create messiahs and adore them in order to distract themselves from the most pressing question that Christmas would otherwise make them face. That question has to do with the ultimate meaning of life and the cold reality that everyone will die.

Yet denial makes life so much easier. Ignorance is bliss. It is easier to numb ourselves with self-indulgence and self-worship. The messiahs whom we want, are the ones who save us from deep thought. We want saviours that help us sidestep the most important questions in life. After all, if we lessen our need for a saviour, then we can find equally pathetic saviours than ourselves.

If my real problem is boredom, then someone please just buy me a toy to stop the pain.

But if my problem is sin, death, and the wrath of God against my sin, then I am going to need something (Someone?) that money cannot buy.

This Infant-king deserves our adoration, but he deserves it in a way that is backed by real time and real wealth investment. What I am asking all of us to do this Advent, is to stop worshiping ourselves and to bow down to the only King that matters, to reflect deeply on our faith. To look for a Messiah who truly is worthy to grant us salvation!

### 1. Who is worthy to be worshipped and praised?

John sees a book. John sees the most important book in the history of the universe. It is the book of God's eternal purposes (cf Ezekiel 2:9-10). This is the book of God's eternal counsel, to judge and to save.

It is not a book as we know it. It is a book as John knew it - a scroll that is rolled up on a rod.

(Rev 5:1) *Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals.*

We are told three important things about the scroll.

Firstly, John saw that it is "in the right hand of him who sat on the throne" (Rev 5:1). In the Bible's culture, "right hand" means place of power and authority, place of favour and privilege. The scroll and its contents are controlled by the sovereign purpose and power of God. The scroll and its contents are important to God and valued by God.

Secondly, John sees that it is covered "with writing on both sides" (Rev 5:1). Most writing at that time was done only on the top layer of horizontal strips. But during that time, important legal documents were confined to one scroll in order to keep all of the document in one place, so, writing started on the front or inside and was finished on the back or even outside.

"I saw ... writing on both sides." God has the entire document in his hand. There is not a second scroll or a third scroll somewhere. Nothing is left out. The document in God's hand is complete. Everything that must happen according to God's eternal counsel is written on that scroll.

Thirdly, John saw that the scroll is "sealed with seven seals" (Rev 5:1).

Official / legal documents were usually shut with a piece of hot wax placed on an inside edge into which was pressed a personal seal. Only the owner of the seal had the right to break the seal and open the scroll. The scroll in the right hand of God is completely and fully secure. Its contents are completely and fully hidden and inaccessible.

The opening of God's scroll not only reveals God's plan for the judgment and salvation of the human race **but it also sets that plan into motion**. If the scroll remains closed, not only does John not get to look at God's purposes for the human race, but those purposes will not be brought to happen.

The loud and mighty angel asks a challenging question. "Who?" he asks. **"Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" (Rev 5:2).**

Don't forget that the scroll is "in the right hand of him who sat on the throne" (Rev 5:1). Do you realize what the mighty angel is asking? He is asking who is able to approach the terrifying, awesome, glorious, and majestic God. Who is so holy and perfect and pure and exalted and magnificent and glorious that he can approach God and be given the task to implement his eternal counsel of salvation, and of judgement?

"Who is worthy?" "Who is worthy to approach the throne?" "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" Remember what is at stake: not just the revealing of God's purposes but also the execution of his plan. "Who is worthy to open the scroll and set into motion God's plan for judgment and salvation?"

## 2. No one is worthy

"Who is worthy?" In a loud voice, the mighty angel asks this of everyone everywhere. Listen to the frightening answer:

*(Rev 5:3) But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it.*

John wants to tell us that in all the universe there is no one, no thing, nobody in any place during no time in history or in the future who is worthy to take the scroll, to break the seals, to read what is inside, and to set into motion God's plan for judgment and salvation.

NO ONE IS WORTHY. No human can be found, because we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

*"I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside"* (Rev 5:4). Of course John cried. The scroll not only cannot be opened, but God's salvation plan for his people and the judgment of his enemies cannot take place.

John wept for his brothers and sisters in the faith. John wept for real people he knew who lost their jobs and homes and businesses for the sake of the Gospel. John wept for real people he knew who were in prison for the sake of the Gospel. John wept for real people he knew who were martyred for the Gospel. John wept for the small, struggling churches who did not compromise when it comes to their faith in God and his Christ. John wept because all their faith and labour would count for nothing if the seals were not opened.

## 3. The Lion who is a Lamb

John is now given a command. "Do not weep." "Stop your crying and lamentation."

**(Rev 5:5) "See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."**

Someone is worthy, John. He is of the human race. He is of David's seed and he is able to open the seals and bring God's eternal purposes to pass. This worthy One is given two titles from the Old Testament.

First of all, he is called "the Lion of the tribe of Judah." This comes from Jacob's deathbed blessings to each of his sons in Genesis 49. Jacob compared Judah to a lion - and it raises the image of strength and majesty. Like this king of beasts, Judah will produce a King to whom all nations will bow in obedience

Secondly, the worthy one is called "the Root of David." This image comes from Isaiah's prophecy. The setting Isaiah has in mind, is the exile in Babylon when all that was left of Israel and the house of David was a stump and a root. Isaiah is given a vision of the future and declares that "a shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a branch will bear fruit" (Is 11:1). The "stump of Jesse" is a reference to Jesse, the father of king David; and, David was Israel's greatest warrior-king. Isaiah speaks of a descendent of David who rules the nations and defeats them in battle.

John had to look, because the Lion, the Root, "has triumphed." He has triumphed. He has conquered. He has prevailed. He has won the victory.

He "has triumphed." But, then, he is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" - He is powerful and terrifying and majestic like a lion. And, he is "the Root of David" - He is a warrior used to battle.

I would expect to see someone or something strong and terrifying - like a lion. I would expect to see a warrior dressed for battle and armed to the teeth!!

But John saw a "Lamb." The Root is a Lamb. The Lion is a Lamb.

The Lion is a Lamb! The Lamb has triumphed and therefore is a Lion. The details of how he has triumphed are noted. The Lamb was looking "as if it had been slain" (Rev 5:6). The Lamb bears the wounds and marks of slaughter. Every reader of the Old Testament knows exactly what John is talking about. John is talking about a

Passover Lamb. John is talking about a Lamb that is slain for the sins of the people on the Day of Atonement. He is talking about the cross of Christ.

The second detail: the Lamb is "standing" (Rev 5:6). This means he is alive. He has been slain and he has been slaughtered. But now he is alive and standing. John is talking about the empty tomb of Christ.

The third detail: "He had seven horns" (Rev 5:6). Seven represents completeness, fullness, perfection. A horn is a symbol of power and strength. Jesus said: "all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me" (Mt 28:18). The Lamb is perfect in its power. John is talking about the ascension of Christ into heaven where he is seated at God's right hand.

The fourth detail: "He had ... seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth" (Rev 5:6). He sees all things and knows all things and rules all things through his Spirit. John is talking about Pentecost. Not by power or might but by the Spirit Christ rules the universe.

"Then I saw a Lamb." The Lion is a Lamb. The Root is a Lamb. He triumphed by going the way of the cross and the grave, by ascending into heaven, by sending his Spirit.

#### **4. The Lion who is a Lamb, is worthy to be worshipped and praised.**

The Lion who is a Lamb is worthy. (Rev 5:6) "Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, **standing in the centre of the throne**, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders."

Christ is standing surrounded by the highest and mightiest of all that God has made. He is standing in the very presence of the God who is holy and most holy and glorious and magnificent. He is standing there, being worshiped and praised with him who sits on the throne.

He is worthy! He is standing. He is not on his knees like all the creatures before the throne. He is standing in the centre of the throne. He is one with God and in God and of God.

He is worthy! Look at what he does. John says, (Rev 5:7) He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. He came, he took, and soon he will open. God did not stop him. God did not strike him down. God let him come. God let him take the scroll. Because he is worthy!

"He came and took the scroll." Now God's plan for the universe will be revealed and set into motion. God's plan to judge and to save will become a reality. When the Lion who is a Lamb took the scroll, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before him and sang a new song. This is followed by the voice of thousands upon ten thousand angels. They also sang.

And then follows the singing of every other creature in the universe. Why all this singing? Because he is worthy! No one else is. But the Lion, the Root, the Lamb is worthy!

#### **Application:**

During Christmas tide we worship and praise him who are worthy to ensure that God's eternal counsel of salvation is set in motion. We worship at the birth of the Lion, who overcame his and our enemies! We worship and praise, we sing and glorify the Infant-King, because it is he who reigns and triumphs and to whom be glory, honour and praise for all eternity!

And as we worship at his birth, we await the coming of the Lion who is a Lamb, slain for all our iniquities and transgressions! We await the judgement of our enemies and his enemies! We await the glorious eternal Kingdom of peace, of peace on earth - and God's goodwill towards those who belong to Christ.

A Christmas tide that contemplates thoughts about the Lion who is a Lamb, does not distract us from the real life questions by becoming an ever entertaining feast of superficial cheer.

Yet it leaves us with glorious gladness, peace and joy, as all our deepest questions are answered and every fear is driven away. By him who is worthy! It is the Lion who is a Lamb, who was born in Bethlehem to save his people from their sins!

This is the Word of God.

Amen.

### 3. THIRD SERMON OUTLINE FROM REVELATION FOR THE ADVENT SEASON.

**Reading: Revelation 12: 1- 12 .**  
**"The Woman and the Dragon"**

Introduction:

Revelation chapters 1 - 11 tells the story of the church on earth during the time between the first and second coming of Christ. Chapters 12 - 22 tells us what happened behind the scenes, in the spiritual realm, during this same period.

Through out the Revelation, persecution is mentioned all the time.

Why is persecution so central to telling the story of the Church? We can go for the immediate answers and point to the Roman Empire and that Caesar considered himself the son of a god and demanded worship, or we can explain the intentions of the enemies of the church in the 20<sup>th</sup> century - the Nazi's in Europe , the persecution behind the iron curtain, the fury of false religion and its terrorists even today.

But why does false religion attacks the church, why do dictators and politicians and those who are powerful in commerce and industry fear the church? Why do certain scientists go out of their way to discredit the church?

What stands behind the suffering of God's people? Behind the scenes - in the spiritual realm - is an enraged dragon. A dragon representing Satan himself.

#### **1. The two signs - a woman and a dragon.**

Revelation 12 introduces two characters to us: a woman and a dragon. Both are said to be signs. They are not a real woman and a real dragon. Listen to what John says when he introduces the woman to us: "A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven ..." (Rev 12:1). The same thing with the dragon: "Then another sign appeared in heaven ..." (12:3). In the Revelation and in the Gospel of John, a "sign" points beyond itself to something else. The woman and the dragon are only signs. Each points to something beyond itself.

What is this woman pointing to? Look at the image. She is "clothed with the sun" - she is glorious. "With the moon under her feet" - she owns dominion and rule. "A crown of twelve stars on her head" - twelve is John's expression for the people of God, both in the Old and the New covenants.

The woman was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth" (vs 3). "She gave birth to a Son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre" (vs 5). The "iron sceptre" concept comes from Psalm 2. There, the One who rules the nations, is the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. So, the child to be born from the woman is the Messiah.

And she fled into the desert where she was protected by God for 1,260 days (vs 6).

Who is this woman who points beyond herself, beyond Mary and beyond the other details of the Christmas story. Who else fled into the desert, to a place prepared for her by God? It was the people of Israel. Remember the twelve stars and that 12 is John's number for the people of God.

Remember that the Old Testament describes the faithful people of God as a woman in labour (Is 54:1-5; 66:7-8). The woman is God's people, the old and new Israel, the seed of God's people from whom the Messiah comes: the woman is the church of God! This mother, the church of God, is gloriously clothed with the sun, moon, and stars. Always pay tribute to the church - in your care and support, your words and your attitudes - she is considered the mother of the Christ and as such glorious in God's sight.

"Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads" (Rev 12:3). We know there is no such thing as a dragon." Both the woman and the dragon are signs pointing beyond themselves.

In many places throughout the Old Testament the dragon is used to refer to mighty kings that opposed God's people (Is 27; Jer 51; etc). But behind these dragons we are to see another power. Yet the sign John saw, like the anti-Christ kings of old, and during John's time, points to someone playing an important role behind the scenes.

(Rev 12:9) 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.

The dragon is the devil, also called Satan or the snake.

He is enormous - it speaks of his ferociousness. He is red - it speaks of his murderous nature. He has seven heads and seven crowns, a reminder of his false claims of sovereignty. He has ten horns - a symbol of power and strength.

## **2. The War against the woman on Earth**

Two signs have been shown to us: a woman and a dragon. But John says:

(Rev 12:4) *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.*

The devil always wanted to stop the Messiah's coming. But he does not succeed. John says:

(Rev 12:5) *She gave birth to a son, a male Child, who will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre. And her Child was snatched up to God and to his throne.*

The life, suffering, and exaltation of Christ are here summarized in one verse: born, snatched up to God where he shares the Father's throne. The dragon was there when Christ came to minister on earth, waiting to leap onto its prey. But before it could act, the baby was snatched away. The dragon looks so powerful, but he is helpless against God's salvation plan and against God's Messiah. Satan has no power over the Christ.

This is not the only time the Devil has failed in his attempt to stop the Messiah's coming. In fact, salvation history is filled with his many attempts. In the Garden of Eden God already said this is what would happen:

(Gen 3:15) *"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."*

-Satan prompted Cain to kill Abel to get rid of the Messiah's blood line. But God preserved the seed of the woman when he raised Seth in Abel's place.

-Remember what Satan did in Egypt. The people of Israel were oppressed and distressed because Pharaoh wanted to work them to death as slave labour. And the midwives were to kill the Hebrew boys at birth. But God preserved his people, he called Moses to lead them and deliver them from slavery and bondage, giving them the land of milk and honey where they were to wait for Messiah's birth.

-King Saul hated David and tried more than once to kill him. Satan once again tried to stop the Messiah's birth from the bloodline of David. But God protected David and protected the coming Saviour.

-Who can forget wicked king Herod and all the slaughtered baby boys of Bethlehem. But baby Jesus was kept safe from Satan's assault.

-When Jesus started his ministry, Satan came to Jesus in the desert and tempted him to gain a Kingdom without the cross.

-Satan came to Jesus in the darkness and loneliness of Gethsemane to stop the Messiah's redeeming work, but Jesus overcame the terrible fear, to save his own through his sacrifice on the cross.

Look at Satan at work throughout the history of salvation. There always will be hostility between the seed of the woman, the Christ, and evil. Satan always tried to snuff out the seed of the woman. He tried to prevent the Messiah's work. Yet every time Satan is blocked by God.

## **3. The War against the dragon in Heaven.**

In two verses, we have been given a glimpse of Satan's work and defeat on earth:

(Rev 12:4-5) *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. (5) She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.*

The battle is shortened to a few sentences that we realize the dragon has no real strength.

But the battle between the seed of the woman, the Messiah, and Satan does not only take place on earth, but also in heaven. John goes on to give us a heavenly perspective on the battle. This battle also is shortened to a few sentences. Also in this realm Satan cannot harm the Messiah or his Kingdom.

(Rev 12:7-9) *"And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. (8) But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. (9) 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."*

See the dragon's weakness! He was "not strong enough." He "lost" his place in heaven. And, three times we hear that he and his angels were "hurled" to the earth. They were cast out of heaven!!

What happened? The Child was born, snatched up, enthroned - and there was war in heaven (vs 7). Once the glorious, victorious Jesus ascended to heaven, there no longer is any room before the throne of God for Satan to accuse the believers.

The key idea is explained in verse 10: "the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down! The "accuser" has been kicked out of heaven. That word "accuser" reminds of the book of Job. Satan was Job's accuser. He said to God: "Job is a fake" and he said to Job "your worship is insincere and your service and giving and sacrifices count for nothing". And Satan had a defensible case against Job and against us. Our faith is weak and small and our worship often is insincere. Grace and mercy can never be earned.

But now that Christ has suffered and died and arose and ascended, Satan is kicked out of heaven. His job as accuser is no more. He has no case against God's people anymore! Because of the "blood of the Lamb" he lost his case against us and he has no valid accusation against us before God anymore! (vs 11). The Child won the battle in heaven as he won the battle on the cross - our salvation is safe and secure in the hand of the Messiah who reigns on the throne of God for our sake.

Jesus intercedes on our behalf. He says to God that by his blood he took our punishment and suffered God's wrath for our sins. By his blood we have been made righteous, free and even holy in God's sight."

The dragon did not only lose against the Child that was born on earth - he also lost against the Child that was glorified in heaven. He has been "hurled" out of heaven.

#### **4. The victory of the Church**

Did Satan quit? Does he ever surrender? Listen to what John says:

*(Rev 12:12) 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."*

Joy in heaven - Jesus has come, the accuser is gone. Woe on earth - the devil/serpent/dragon has come.

Satan cannot attack Jesus anymore. With the death and resurrection of Jesus, he no longer has a job as accuser. So he attacks the church on earth, instead.

In this light, consider what the Revelation says to us in verses 6 & 13:

*(Rev 12:6,13) 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 ... (13) When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child.*

The woman, the church, remains under attack. She is under attack for 1,260 days. We see this number more often in Revelation. It is the 42 months and the "time, times and half a time" that the Revelation speaks about. That is the length of time that the woman, the Church, is under attack, but God protects her. The church is under attack from the ascension until the return of Jesus, but God protects her always. That is what this is all about. (cf verses 6, 14, 15,16).

This is why we look forward to the return of Christ. To finally end the attack. To finally set us and all of his creation free from any oppression by evil. Let's take courage. The reason for Satan's fury is that he knows his time is short. And he knows he was defeated by the Child - both in Bethlehem and on Calvary and in heaven! "He is filled with fury because he knows that his time is short" (Rev 12:12).

And we are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus!

We celebrate the birth of the Child as people who were set free - as people who look forward to the wedding feast of the Messiah! We celebrate as victors in Christ should do! We are under the protection of the Infant-King - now and forever!

This is the Word of God.

Amen.

#### 4. FOURTH SERMON OUTLINE FROM REVELATION FOR THE ADVENT SEASON.

##### Reading Revelation 19:1-10

Revelation 19:7-8

##### "The Wedding Supper of the Lamb"

We are assured by observing Advent, that when Jesus comes again, we will sit down with him at the wedding supper of the Lamb. It means that we will be in heaven, living in the beautiful mansion Jesus prepared for us. We will enjoy a full, abundant life, without sin, death or sickness and for ever enjoy the glory of the Lord Jesus to the full.

Living with Christ in the new heaven and earth, is like celebrating a continuous glorious and perfect wedding feast as the guests of Jesus, being completely fulfilled by our eternal purpose and being baptised into the eternal light and love of God.

##### 1. Marriage customs during the times of Jesus on earth

To understand the image in front of us, you need to understand something of Middle Eastern marriage customs. During the times of Jesus, there were three steps to a wedding. First came the engagement. At this stage a formal agreement was made between the father of the groom and the father of the bride that their son and daughter would someday marry each other. During those times, marriages were arranged. You did not pick your marriage partner. One's parents decided whom one was to marry.

Next came the betrothal. The betrothal was a ceremony held in the home of the bride's parents. At this ceremony the two families and the bridal couple made promises to each other in front of witnesses. The groom also gave presents to the bride. The bridal couple were now regarded as husband and wife, but they did not yet have the privilege of living together. The betrothal pledge was so binding that it took divorce proceedings to sever the relationship.

Finally, about one year later the marriage ceremony was celebrated. The bridegroom and his friends would parade to the bride's house where they would be met by the bride and her friends. Usually this was done at night so there could be a spectacular display of torchlight. Then the whole group *would go in procession to the groom's house* where the wedding and wedding banquet was to be held.

##### 2. Preparing a home for the Bride

During the waiting period between the betrothal and the wedding, certain specific things were to happen.

Firstly, when a young Israelite man was engaged to be married, he went to his father's house and prepared a place for his bride. Usually this meant adding a room or a suite of rooms to the father's house. So the groom and his brothers or servants would labour. They would add on to the father's house. Dirt would be packed, a foundation would be poured, bricks would be laid, a roof would be raised, doors and windows would be installed, and the inside would be finished. During the entire building project the bridegroom eagerly anticipated the bride's arrival; he could hardly wait for the time when they lived together as husband and wife.

Older brothers and uncles have already added their rooms to the father's house. It is no longer a single family dwelling; instead, it is a community, even an entire village. The bride would be taking up residence in a portion of a large mansion and will join a crowd of people who are already there.

The first thing that happened during the betrothal period was that the groom prepared rooms for his bride. In the light of this, Jesus said before he ascended to heaven, "In my Father's house are many rooms ... I am going there to prepare a place for you" (Jn 14:2). Jesus is saying, "I am the bridegroom. The church is my bride." Like a bridegroom, Jesus went to his Father's house to prepare a place for his bride. And, like a bridegroom Jesus awaits the bride's arrival with great anticipation.

Like the bridegrooms of Israel, Jesus prepares a dwelling place for his bride.

##### 3. Paying the price for the Bride

The second thing that happened during the waiting period between the betrothal and the wedding, was the payment of the bridal price. During the betrothal, and sometimes before, a price is set for the bride. After the betrothal the groom, and his family, gather the price together and pay it to the bride's family.

Some rebel at this thought. They think it makes the bride sound like a piece of property to be bought and sold. They don't understand that the bride's family lost a valuable worker and needed to be compensated for that. As Proverbs puts it,  
(Prov 31:10) A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.  
A good wife, a hard and willing worker, was worth her weight in gold and silver.

Also carefully note the following verses:

(Acts 20:28) Be shepherds of the church of God, which *he bought with his own blood*.

(1Cor 6:20) ... you were *bought at a price*. (Cf 1Cor 7:23)

(1Pt 1:18-19) For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed ... (19) *but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect*.

(Rev 5:9) And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and *with your blood you purchased men for God* from every tribe and language and people and nation."

Do you hear that the bridal price has been paid! Jesus paid for his bride. Not with silver or gold, not with rubies or pearls, but with his precious blood upon the cross. Don't we celebrate this during Advent and Christmas? Don't we celebrate the fact that the bridal price has been paid when Christ first came and that he can prepare to receive us in heaven when he comes again?

#### **4. The Bride prepares for the Groom**

The third thing that happened during the waiting period between the betrothal and the wedding, was that the bride made herself ready. I remember girls talking about a "trousseau chest" when I was a student. It often was a beautiful wooden chest given to her by her parents when she turned 18, or 21, used to store collected items such as clothing, table linens, towels, bed linens, quilts and occasionally dishware in anticipation of married life. Such a collection used to be a common coming-of-age rite in those days; it was typically a step on the road to marriage between dating a man and engagement.

Likewise, at the time of Jesus, a bride would make herself ready for marriage. Before the wedding she would gather the items she needed to set up her own home. On the day of the wedding, of course, she would wash herself, braid her hair, put on a wedding gown, apply makeup, and do whatever else she could to make herself look beautiful for the groom.

What does the church, the bride of Christ do during the time between the betrothal and the wedding?

(Rev 19:7-8) ... *the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. (8) Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.*" (Fine linen represents the righteous acts of the believers.)

There is a tension, a strain, a dichotomy within these two verses. On the one hand, we see that something is given to the bride to make her beautiful - "fine linen ... was given her to wear." She has been given clothes that made her beautiful for her groom.

This is a not a new thought for John's audience - at least, not if they knew the Old Testament. Listen to God's promise through Isaiah:

(Is 61:10) *I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

Listen to the comparison to marriage. Look at the phrases "garment of salvation" and "robe of righteousness". The LORD redeems and beautifies the church so that she can stand next to Christ at the wedding. The LORD makes us fit for heaven. Christ prepares us for the wedding day. Christ does. It is all of Christ and not of us. It is all of grace and not our works.

On the other hand there is a tension here. John not only mentions something given to the bride but also something done by the bride. She "made herself ready." The bride of Christ does something to make herself look beautiful for Jesus Christ, the bridegroom. She puts on fine linen, bright and clean, which represents grateful works of righteousness. She prepares herself for the wedding day.

Look at our text again. "Fine linen, bright and clean, was given to her." "Was given." Here is another instance where God is the prime actor. In other words, God has granted the bride of Christ the grace to perform the deeds by which she makes herself ready for her wedding day.

We see this same tension in other places. Listen to the following verses:

(Phil 2:12-13) *Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, (13) for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*

(Eph 2:8-10) *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- (9) not by works, so that no one can boast. (10) For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

**Application:**

A wedding is going to take place: Christ is the bridegroom and the Church is the bride.

Where are we in the marriage process? The bride has already been chosen - from eternity in fact (Eph 1:4,11). The betrothal has already taken place because long ago already God has said, "I will be your God and you will be my people" (Ex 6:7; Jer 7:23, 11:4, 30:22; Ezek 36:28). Now we are in the time of waiting, when the groom prepares a place, because the bridal price has been paid and the bride is getting herself ready to receive the Groom.

During this season we anticipate all of this. We anticipate sitting down with Jesus at the wedding supper of the Lamb.

Take note of the beatitude.

(Rev 19:9) Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God."

What a blessing it is to know the Lord, celebrate his birth and serve him with great joy. What an even bigger blessing it will be to be seated with the Lord at his heavenly banquet table where we will celebrate forever the wedding supper of the Lamb.

We look forward to the Christmas feast, now so soon to come.

We even more so wait upon the Wedding Feast with great anticipation. It will be more glorious and joyous than any earthly celebration we ever experienced. It will be much more wonderful and glorious than any Christmas feast ever celebrated.

And it will last for all eternity!

This is the Word of God.

In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.