

Main Idea: To appreciate the real meaning of what happened on Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday, we need to know the story behind the story. It’s the story behind the story that the Bible gives us in Revelation 12.

- I. We need to know the story behind the story of Easter.
 - A. Scene #1: John sees a pregnant woman (1-2).
 - B. Scene #2: John sees an enormous, red dragon (3-6).
 1. He’s powerful (3).
 2. He wanted to kill the child (4).
 3. His plot failed (5-6).
 - C. Scene #3: John describes an angelic war in heaven (7-9).
 1. Michael and his angels fought the dragon and his angels (7).
 2. The dragon lost and was hurled to the earth (8-9).
 3. The identity of the dragon is clarified (9).
 - D. Scene #4: John records the reaction of heaven (10-12).
 1. God’s kingdom has come (10).
 2. The accuser has been hurled down (10b).
 3. The key to the dragon’s defeat is identified (11).
 4. What is gain for heaven will result in pain for the earth (12).
 - E. Scene #5: John records the reaction of the defeated dragon (13-17).
 1. The dragon pursued the woman (13).
 2. The woman fled to a prepared place for three and one-half "times" (14).
 3. The dragon tried to destroy the woman, but failed (15-16).
 4. The dragon then sought to make war against the woman’s offspring (17).
- II. We need to worship the main character in the story behind the story.
 - A. He was born as a man (5a).
 - B. He was caught up to God (5b).
 - C. He is being worshipped in heaven (10-12).
 1. He died for His people.
 2. He sustains His people in the present battle.
 3. He will rule the world.

Make It Personal: Am I responding rightly to the story behind the story?

This will be a very different Easter message, and here’s why. You likely know the resurrection story. Two thousand years ago Jesus the Messiah was crucified, and placed in a tomb. But on the third day, the first day of the week, He was raised from the dead, left His tomb, and was seen and worshipped by eye-witnesses.

I’ve preached that story many times, and as long as God gives me breath, will continue to preach it, for it’s through this gospel story that God grants sinners forgiveness and eternal life.

Yet to appreciate what really happened on Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday, we need to know the story behind the story. It’s the story behind the story that the Bible gives us in Revelation 12.

Scripture Reading: Revelation 12

This is the story behind the story. When we read it, we quickly notice that this story is full of images and word pictures: a pregnant woman clothed with the sun, a seven-headed dragon, a child that’s snatched up to heaven, an angelic warfare, and so on. What’s going on? In Revelation 12, the Spirit of God doesn’t merely *tell* a story. He *shows* a story, but uses words rather than pictures. That’s because Revelation uses a

^{**}Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For a previous look at this passage, see the message preached at WBC on 12/17/06.

genre of literature called *apocalyptic literature*, which was popular two centuries B.C. and a century or so A.D., and then sort of died out.

We must always approach the study of God's Word with humility, a teachable spirit, and with a vital question in mind: *What was the author's intent* when he wrote the text I'm reading? That question is ever so critical in studying the book of Revelation. What did John mean when he wrote what he wrote? What was his *intent*?

The first phrase of the book helps answer that question. Revelation 1:1 says, "The revelation of Jesus Christ..." This book, then, according to John, is the *revelation of a person, Jesus Christ* (1:1). It's intent is to reveal Christ to us.

When interpreting any portion of God's Word, a *text* must be seen in its *context*. So what's the context of Revelation 12? What's been said in previous chapters?

In chapter one John actually sees and describes Christ in His glorified state. In chapters 2-3 he records seven letters that the Glorified Christ sent to seven local churches in Asia Minor in the first century. These churches were facing persecution and the Savior sent messages both to encourage and warn them. That's important to remember when studying Revelation. It was written to a *persecuted church*. How do you encourage people who are losing their properties, businesses, and maybe their lives? You let them know that this isn't the end, that there's more to life than meets the eye!

In chapters 4-5 we see a Lamb approach and take a scroll, the title deed of the universe, from the Almighty. In chapters 6 and following, the Lamb begins to open the seals, thus enacting the contents of the scroll and bringing about God's judgment on the earth. And so, in chapters 6-11 we see the terrible judgments that God will pour out on this rebellious planet He created.

Then comes chapter 12, and what a chapter it is. In a sermon preached on Revelation 12 a century and a half ago, C. H. Spurgeon began with this disclaimer:

It is not my main object at this time to expound the chapter before us. I scarcely consider myself qualified to explain any part of the Book of Revelation, and none of the expositions I have ever seen entice me to attempt the task, for they are mostly occupied with a refutation of all the interpretations which have gone before, and each one seems to be very successful indeed in proving that all the rest know nothing at all about the matter. The sum total of substantial instruction in nearly all the comments upon the Revelation amounts to this, that our heavenly Father has said in his word some mysterious things which few of his children can yet comprehend. This is just what we might have expected when the infinite God speaks to finite men, and it is no doubt intended to humble us and draw forth our reverent adoration. Happily there is a blessing to those who read and hear and keep the words of his prophecy, for had that blessing been confined to those who understand it, few would have obtained the benediction. The Revelation is a most blessed book, but its unfolding has yet to be accomplished.²

I can relate to Spurgeon. To borrow his words, *I scarcely consider myself qualified to explain any part of the Book of Revelation*. And yet, if we're willing to live with some unanswered questions, I believe there's much we can gain from Revelation,

² Taken from online message, "How They Conquered the Dragon," May 30, 1875, C. H. SPURGEON, www.biblebb.com

namely, we can gain a fresh and fuller appreciation of Jesus' cross and resurrection from Revelation 12.

The Lord has given us Revelation 12 to produce two outcomes. The first is to *know*. The second is to *worship*.

I. We need to know the story behind the story of Easter.

So often we miss this when Passion week comes. "Yes, God sent His Son to the cross," we say, "...to show His love for me and to save me from my sins." That's true, but that's not the only reason Jesus came, to save you and me. God had a bigger agenda in mind, a *cosmic* agenda. In other words, the ultimate meaning of Easter is larger in scope *than you and me*.

The truth is, there's a war going on in the cosmos, a universal conflict. That's why Jesus came, and died, and defeated death. And when you know this story behind the story, you'll never think about Easter the same way again.

Verse 1 begins: "A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven." John actually saw two 'signs' in chapter 12, this one described in verses 1 & 2 and another described beginning in verse 3. Please keep in mind that John says that the signs he saw were *in heaven* (1, 3, 10). But by its very nature a "sign" is something that points beyond itself.

It's very difficult to follow the chronology of John's vision. Some even suggest that the vision does not flow in chronological sequence. That ought not surprise us, because heaven isn't locked into time and space as we are on earth, and this vision takes place in heaven.

George Ladd observes, "This is not a vision of an event which is to take place at the end; it is a vision in highly imaginative terms of the heavenly warfare between God and Satan, which has its counterpart in history in the conflict between the church and demonic evil. As such, the vision completely transcends the usual categories of time and space. It is not meant to be a foretelling of history but a representation of the struggle in the spiritual world which lies behind history."³

This is what John saw in Revelation 12. There are five scenes in the story behind the story.

A. Scene #1: John sees a pregnant woman (1-2). "A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth."

Rather than developing the particulars of this scene or of those that follow, my aim is to take a panoramic view of this vision, to get the plot of the story behind the story. John describes a woman. He shares three details about her.

1. *She's clothed with the sun.*
2. *She's wearing a crown of twelve stars.*
3. *She's about to give birth.*

What a woman! Who is she? Some think it refers to Mary, the mother of the Lord (e.g. Roman Catholics), but the description of this woman in this vision doesn't fit Mary. Others say this woman is the *Church*, but the church didn't give birth to Christ,

³ George Ladd, p. 166.

rather Christ founded the church. Mary Baker Eddy was conceited enough to claim this woman represented *herself*.

Who is she? Again, opinions abound.⁴ But let's notice carefully the imagery, particularly the reference to the sun, the moon, and twelve stars. Where else do we see these images in the Bible? In Joseph's dream in Genesis 37. There Joseph saw the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowing down to him. It was through Joseph's father, Jacob, and through Jacob's twelve sons that God formed the nation of Israel. And it was through this nation, Israel, that God later brought (*birthed*) the Messiah into the world.

So the woman, it would seem, refers to the Jewish people. A scene to follow will suggest the woman isn't a reference to *all* Jewish people, but to a particular segment of Jewish people.

Something particular catches John's eye as he watches this woman. She's pregnant, he says, and her due date has arrived. In fact, she's screaming in pain, and yet even as she is screaming, the first sign ends abruptly, and another appears.

B. Scene #2: John sees an enormous, red dragon (3-6). Verse 3—"Then [ESV says, 'And'] another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads."

Keep in mind that apocalyptic literature is filled with images that come out of the Old Testament. So in order to make sense of the word pictures, we must check out the Old Testament background. For instance, in the Old Testament monstrous beings like dragons are used metaphorically to refer to the enemies of God and His people (e.g.—Ps. 74:14; Isa. 27:1; Ezek. 29:3). So this dragon represents an enemy of God and His people, and we're given three details about him here.

1. *He's powerful (3).* The seven heads seem to represent his great wisdom and the ten horns his great power.⁵ His seven crowns would suggest he possesses tremendous authority. But how does he use this wisdom, power, and authority?

Verse 4—"His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born."

Note the position of the dragon. He's right there in front of the woman. Why?

2. *He wanted to kill the child (4).* That's his intent, to "devour" [says the ESV and AV] this newborn child.

Who does such a thing? Who kills a baby before it even has a chance to live? This enemy of God does. He is a murderer, and he uses his wisdom, power, and authority to seek to eliminate one particular child.

But he's not as wise, powerful, and authoritative as he thinks he is.

3. *His plot failed (5-6).* "She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his

⁴ Ladd says it refers to the "ideal Zion," that is, "the Jerusalem which is above" referred to by Paul (Gal 4:26; p. 167). Donald Grey Barnhouse (in Strauss, pp. 229ff) says the woman represents "the spiritual Israel" and not merely the nation of Israel. She is "the elect of the race." The *NIV Study Bible* says it's probably "a symbolic reference to the believing Messianic community." Lehman Strauss says the woman represents *Israel*, for it was from Israel that the Messiah came.

⁵ Observation taken from the *NIV Study Bible* footnote.

throne. 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.”

We’ll take a closer look at the child later, but for now notice what happened to the child. The dragon was right there ready to pounce on the child. He couldn’t miss. He was right in front of the delivering mother. But he did miss. His attempt failed. The child was snatched up to God.

Consequently, the enraged dragon turned his aggression on the woman who, according to John, fled to the desert, to a place of protection prepared for her by God. There she stayed for 1,260 days.

Earlier I suggested that the woman isn’t a reference to *all* Jewish people, but to a particular segment of Jewish people. Here we learn it refers to those who had to flee because of their association with this special male child. So which Jewish people experienced Satanic attack *after* Jesus’ birth and because of their association with Jesus? That description fits *believing Jews*, Jews who believe that this special child is the Messiah. Messianic Jews.

Just who are these believing, Messianic Jews that God takes care of for 1,260 days (that’s 42 months, or three-and-one-half years)? Some feel the imagery is strictly symbolic. Others take it literally but suggest it refers to Jewish Christians who fled to Pella in AD 66 to escape the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. Another literal approach says it refers to a yet future time when believing Jews will be preserved during the Tribulation period, a view I favor. But what happens to the woman in this vision goes beyond the aim of this message, which concerns the child.

It’s at that point that, all of a sudden, scene two ends. We will see this woman again, but not until scene five. The focus shifts dramatically in scene three...

C. Scene #3: John describes an angelic war in heaven (7-9). Verse 7 begins, “And there was war in heaven.” When was this war? Was it after the child’s birth and after the child’s return to heaven? That’s what we would conclude if the scenes are progressive in a chronological sense. But that’s not necessarily the case, not in apocalyptic literature. Nor is it likely.

In fact, it’s more likely that the battle in heaven we’re about to consider explains why the dragon was after the child in scene two in the first place.

Who participated in this battle? Here were the sides...

1. *Michael and his angels fought the dragon and his angels (7).* “And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.” So this dragon is a fierce character. And audacious, too. He’s putting up a fight in heaven itself, the very dwelling place of God.

So what happened in this heavenly battle? This.

2. *The dragon lost and was hurled to the earth (8-9).* In the NIV, “But he was not strong enough [ESV ‘But he was defeated’], and they lost their place in heaven. 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.”

So the dragon ‘was not strong enough,’ and therefore ‘defeated.’ As a result, he and his wicked cohorts ‘lost their place in heaven,’ which is where they used to live. This powerful being was ‘thrown down,’ a verb that’s repeated to underscore its significance.

Now we can begin to understand why this dragon is so upset at this child, why he wants to devour him. As we'll see in scene four, the dragon's defeat and casting out of heaven is connected with the authority of this child. Lest there be any doubt, in verse 9...

3. *The identity of the dragon is clarified (9)*. He's 'that ancient serpent' that we first meet in Genesis 3, the one that turned mankind against his Maker. He is called the 'devil,' or 'Satan,' a term that means 'the accuser.' And he is the one who 'leads the world astray' (NIV), 'the deceiver of the whole world' (ESV).

So now we know why the world is in the shape it's in. This is why paradise was lost. This is at the core of the story behind the story. This dragon, this foe who himself rebelled against God, has used his deceptive power to turn the world away from and against God.

So ends scene three. In the first three scenes John records what he *saw*. In scene four John *hears* something.

D. Scene #4: John records the reaction of heaven (10-12). He writes in verse 10, "Then I *heard* a loud voice in heaven." Who is speaking? We're not told. But this anonymous voice announces four significant realities because of the victory over the dragon, the enemy of God.

1. *God's kingdom has come (10)*. "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ."

I think it's important to notice what they're talking about in heaven. Not how the stock market is going, nor whose playing in March Madness. No, the subject of conversation in heaven is the kingdom of God. And specifically, this powerful voice says that the salvation and the power and the kingdom of God, and the authority of His Christ, *have come*.

Back in Revelation 11:15 John heard another message that loud voices in heaven proclaimed. "The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

But that hasn't happened yet, has it? The kingdom of this world has not yet become the kingdom of our Lord. How can this heavenly voice say it *has*? He can say that because it *has* and it *will*.

On earth we're limited by time and space. Not so in heaven. To us, the kingdom of this world becoming the kingdom of our Lord is *yet future*, but that's from the perspective of time. As far as heaven is concerned, it's as good as done.

When King Jesus came to earth as a baby 2,000 years ago, He came on a mission. Robed in flesh, the God-man came to reclaim this fallen world and restore it to its rightful Owner. And He succeeded! Through His perfect life, He did what sinful mankind had failed to do. By His sacrificial death, He paid the penalty that sinners deserve, and satisfied the just requirements of the Holy One. And then, by His triumphant resurrection, King Jesus broke the power of sin and death.

Hebrews 2:14 says He destroyed the one who holds the power of death, that is, the devil. He inaugurated His kingdom and now rules in cognito in the lives of His followers (Luke 17:21). One day, perhaps even this very day, King Jesus will return in glory and establish His kingdom for all to see.

My friend, this is the story behind the story! Indeed, this is the goal of God for history, which is *His* story. This is the *climax* of God's redemptive plan. This is the

subject that heaven is rehearsing and anticipating even now. John heard the announcement himself.

God's kingdom has come! Yet that's not all he heard. There's a second reality.

2. *The accuser has been hurled down (10b)*. "For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down." Here the dragon, the enemy of God, is called *the accuser*. Who does he accuse and where? He accuses the "brothers," another family term in Revelation 12. We've seen 'mother,' 'son,' and now 'brothers.' The accuser tries to get at God by attacking His family. But his accusations hold no weight in heaven. The voice says he has been 'thrown down.'

I don't think this is referring to Satan's original expulsion from heaven. This 'hurling down' seems to be connected with Christ's work at the cross. Colossians 2:15 offers this helpful commentary, "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, *triumphing over them by the cross.*"

As we just saw in scene three, the war in heaven talked about in verse 7 in which Michael and his angels fought against the dragon resulted in the dragon being 'hurled down (9).' Now the voice in verse 10 uses the same word, saying the accuser has been 'hurled down.'⁶ So the heavenly voice seems to be talking about something that happened on that Good Friday when Christ died.

The story? Christ died on the cross. The story behind the story? Christ dealt the death blow to the accuser when he died on the cross. This brings us to the third reality.

3. *The key to the dragon's defeat is identified (11)*. Notice verse 11, "They [the ones the accuser previously had been accusing day and night] overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."

How is the accuser overcome? By the 'blood of the Lamb' and by the 'word of their testimony.' The Lamb's death on the cross provides the power for the defeat of the dragon. Those covered by the Lamb's blood are victors.

That doesn't mean, however, the battle is over. Those protected by the Lamb's blood may need to shed their own blood, but as the voice affirms, they're more than willing to do so, for "they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."

This brings us to a fourth, sobering reality.

4. *What is gain for heaven will result in pain for the earth (12)*. The heavenly hymn concludes on a solemn note in verse 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."

So the dragon is cast out of heaven. Hooray for heaven! But where does he go? To the earth. Which is why the messenger announces in verse 12, "Woe to you, O earth!" The dragon is defeated, but he's like a rabid beast caught in a death trap, fighting to the very end.

E. Scene #5: John records the reaction of the defeated dragon (13-17).

1. *The dragon pursued the woman (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." Remember, the mother represents, I've suggested, *believing Jews*, for it was

⁶ Alan Johnson comments, "At the time of Christ's death on earth, Satan was being defeated in heaven." *Expos. Bible Commentary*, p. 517.

through the Jewish people that the Son was born into the world. The dragon failed to kill the male child so now we see him taking out his fury on the male child's mother.

I've been listening this week to the audio book, *The Volunteer*. It's the story of a Polish man named Witold Pilecki who actually volunteered to get arrested and be sent to Auschwitz, where he remained for two years and nine months. Why would he do such a thing? To expose the outside world to the unthinkable atrocities the Nazis were committing inside that death camp, where they dehumanized, tortured, and killed more than 1.1 million people, with nearly one million of the victims being Jews.

What is the source of this nonsensical anti-Semitism? Here we see the answer, in the story behind the story. Satan hates the Jewish people because he hates God. And he knows that God has chosen to work through this people group to rescue people from every people group, and that He's chosen to do this rescue work through the male child we meet in Revelation 12.

In verse 14 we see God intervene, "But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time." In other words...

2. *The woman fled to a prepared place for three and one-half "times" (14).*

The phrase 'time, times, and half a time' seems to be synonymous with the 1,260 days mentioned in verse 6. As I mentioned when commenting on verse 6, this three-and-a-half-year event seems to be referring to a portion of the yet future time period called the Tribulation, when anti-semitism will reach an ugly climax.

But the point seems to be this. Whether then or now, God takes care of His own. Sometimes He delivers His people *from* tribulation. At other times He takes them right *through* it.

Just think of what this meant for John, the writer of the book. He was a Jewish man who had become a believer in the Messiah. He's living at the end of the first century, facing intense persecution by the Romans. What he saw here must have encouraged him greatly, for the vision makes it clear that God will never let go of His people.

Watch how He helps them in verses 15-16, "Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth."

3. *The dragon tried to destroy the woman, but failed (15-16).* The 'earth helped the woman by opening its mouth'—perhaps an allusion to Numbers 16 where the earth opened and swallowed up Korah and his God-defying men. But even with his end in sight, the dragon doesn't give up. As the final scene ends...

4. *The dragon then sought to make war against the woman's offspring (17).* "Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus."

Who is 'the rest' of this woman's 'offspring'? If the child was Christ, and if the woman referred to believing Jews, the rest of her offspring would seem to refer to believing Gentiles. Remember, the first church was Jewish, but after ten years or so the

gospel spread to non-Jews, and Gentiles believed in Jesus Christ. And so the woman, the Jewish believers, gave birth to Gentile believers.

John learns their identity at the end of verse 17. They are ‘those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.’ John also learns that the dragon will try to do to the rest of the woman’s offspring what he tried to do to the woman and her son. But as the rest of the book of Revelation will show, the dragon will fail. God’s kingdom will prevail. This is the story behind the story, and we need to know it!

Friends, this is the first reason God gave us Revelation 12. So we would *know*. He wants us to know that Christmas, and Good Friday, and Easter, are all part of a much bigger story. It’s not just about God saving you and me. It’s about God reclaiming His creation, establishing His kingdom, and dealing justly with all rivals to His kingdom.

Did you know that? What steps are you talking so that you know what God wants you to know? He gave you this Book so you could know. Are you reading it and studying it? He established the church so you could know. Are you making church the priority He intends it to be in your life? If you don’t have a church, I invite you to keep coming here. We open this Book together every time we meet so that we might *know*.

But not just know. The demons know, but they tremble. Why? Something’s missing. It’s the purpose of knowing, and it’s the second purpose of Revelation 12. To know, and to *worship*.

II. We need to worship the main character in the story behind the story.

Who is this son? We’ve commented about Him throughout this message, but to conclude I’d simply like to reiterate three facts about Him revealed in John’s vision.

A. He was born as a man (5a). “She gave birth to a son, a male child.” God did not send angels to rescue creation. God Himself entered creation. He became *a man*.⁷

B. He was caught up to God (5b). “And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.” There’s no mention in this vision of any detail concerning this Son’s life, His death, or His resurrection. John didn’t need those details, nor do we, for we can read them in the Gospel accounts. What God wanted John to remember was this. Where the Son is right now.

Where is He? He who came to earth, died on a cross, and walked out of His tomb alive, has been “caught up” (the same verb describes the rapture of the church in 1 Thes. 4:17). He has ascended back to God (mission accomplished!) and to his throne in heaven (kingdom restored)

And what’s happening to this Son now? Revelation 12 makes that clear.

⁷ Commenting on this son C. H. Spurgeon said: “If you refer to the expositors you will find that they discover in this passage the dragon-ensign of pagan Rome, and its removal from its position by Constantine, who set up the cross in its stead. I do not believe the Lord took any more interest in Constantine than in any other sinner, and it seems to me little short of blasphemous to say that he was the man-child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron, and was caught up into God and to his throne. His adoption of Christianity as the state religion was not a thing for glorified spirits to rejoice in, but a dreadful calamity, fitted only to make sport for Pandemonium. No one ever did the church a worse turn than he who first joined her to the state. The act was a piece of state policy and kingcraft and no more, a business utterly unworthy of record by an inspired pen.” Taken from online message, “*How They Conquered the Dragon*,” May 30, 1875, C. H. SPURGEON, www.biblebb.com

C. He is being worshipped in heaven (10-12). My friend, what's the subject of conversation in heaven? Hear the voice again in verse 10. "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority *of his Christ*." And in verse 11, "They overcame him by the blood *of the Lamb*."

The subject is the Son! Heaven is marveling at the Son's accomplishments, three in particular.

1. *He died for His people.* Note that heaven is talking about His *blood*.
2. *He sustains His people in the present battle.* Again, heaven acknowledges that He does so by the power of His *blood*.
3. *He will rule the world.* Verse 5 again, "She gave birth to a son, a male child, *who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter*."

This is what is happening in heaven. They are talking about the Son! They are *worshipping* the Son! They know that what matters most is the Son!

And what's happening in heaven *ought* to be happening on earth. One day it will. One day the Son will rule on this earth, and every knee will bow before Him.

But the question this Easter morning is this. Are we worshipping Him now?

Make It Personal: Am I responding rightly to the story behind the story?

So you know the story, that Jesus died on the cross, and that He came out of that tomb alive. You know that. That's good. Now you know the story behind the story, about the cosmic battle, about the dragon and his wicked accomplices who hate the Son, about the applause of heaven for the Son who has triumphed, who is now caring for His people, and who will soon come again to earth to establish His forever kingdom.

Will you now and from this day forward choose to worship Him? He is worthy.

Closing Song: #220 "He Lives" (all 3 verses)

Community Group Discussion:

1. To appreciate the real meaning of what happened on Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday, it's important to know the story behind the story, which we're given in Revelation 12. Take time to re-read today's text. What is the story behind the story? Summarize the events of Revelation 12.
2. It's vital to know the story of Jesus as presented in the four gospels. But it's also important to know the story behind the story. Why? What happens if we don't know what we're told in Revelation 12, or if we do know it but neglect it?
3. What encourages you most from Revelation 12?
4. Revelation 12 raises many questions that are hard to answer. Name a few. Why would the Lord give us a passage in His Word that raises so many questions? What's the God-honoring response to such passages?
5. Describe the Jesus we meet in Revelation 12. How can knowing this truth about Jesus help us as we live this week?