

# The Christ Clause

## Revelation 12

Last night we were talking about Christmas movies. Of course most Christmas films are pretty silly and have nothing at all to do with the real reason for Christmas that we celebrate as believers in Jesus. One of those silly movies is “The Santa Claus” starring Tim Allen. Probably most of you have seen it. Scott Calvin (played by Tim Allen) accidentally kills Santa, and suddenly finds himself stuck with the job of being Santa Claus because of some small print in the Santa Clause contract that states... “In putting on this suit and entering the sleigh, the wearer waives any and all rights to previous identity, real or implied, and fully accepts the duties and responsibilities of Santa Claus until such time that wearer becomes unable to do so either by accident or design.”

Just like Scott Calvin didn't know some important details about Santa... you may not know some important “behind the scene details” about the Christmas Story. The popular Christmas Story involves Mary and Joseph, some shepherds, wise men and the baby Jesus.

But to make sure that we don't over sentimentalize the nativity scene into coziness and comfort, the Apostle John was given the job of giving us ‘the rest of the story’ (as Paul Harvey would say). There's another version of the Christmas Story that reveals what was going on backstage of the greatest event in human history.

What better place to find “The Christ Clause” than in the book that was written specifically to reveal what's going on behind the scenes in heaven? I want you to turn in your bibles to Revelation 12 (READ).

- 1 Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.**
- 2 Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.**
- 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.**
- 4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.**
- 5 She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.**
- 6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.**
- 7 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought,**
- 8 but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.**
- 9 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.**
- 10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have**

come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

- 11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.
- 12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.”
- 13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child.
- 14 But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.
- 15 So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood.
- 16 But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.
- 17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

I just read you the Christmas story. Did you recognize it? You say, “But where are the Shepherds? Where are the Wise Men?” There’s none of that in this version, but what we do find is a war! “A war at Christmas? The time for peace and goodwill for all mankind?” You better believe it! And this isn’t just ANY war... this is THE war! This is the war behind all wars! It’s a cosmic spiritual battle! Revelation 12 resolves the problem stated so well by Longfellow in his Christmas carol, I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day. The fourth stanza of that song says,

And in despair I bowed my head  
“There is no peace on earth,” I said,  
“For hate is strong and mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good will to men.”

On that first Christmas night the angels announced, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth PEACE, goodwill towards men.” But most of us know, like Longfellow, “There is no peace on earth.” Why does it seem like the nations are fighting more...not less? Why is evil so prevalent? Why does a troubled 20 year old man murder classrooms full of children? I mean, if as the gospel proclaims that, “Evil has been defeated”, then why is it still wreaking such havoc in the world today?

To answer those and other questions, let me take you vs. by vs. through the Christmas Story from GODS pt. of view! This is how all of heaven and the angels saw the very 1st Christmas... and it’s a lot different from the way we usually portray it. To start with, you have to understand that Rev.12 is at the center of what the book of Revelation is all about! It’s the central focus!

There are 3 main characters in Rev. 12...the woman, the dragon and the child. John says in vs.1... **“Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.”**

Who (or what) is this woman? To give you the quick answer... she’s the people of God, both before and after the coming of Jesus.

She represents the faithful Israelites and Mary (the mother of Jesus) and faithful believers all at the same time! She is a picture of faithful Israel because the 12 stars in the crown of her head symbolize the 12 tribes of Israel.

She's also Mary, the mother of Jesus because vs. 2 says that **"Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth."**

Just as Isaiah 66:7 predicted that she would **"Before she was in labor, she gave birth; Before her pain came, She delivered a male child."**

Who is the male child? He's Jesus the Messiah. Rev.12:5 tells us that he will **"rule all nations with a rod of iron."** That's a phrase that comes right out of Ps. 2, which is all about the Messiah.

The 3rd character in our "Cosmic Christmas Story"... is the Dragon. Any guesses on who this represents? Sure! Vs. 9 comes right out and tells us that it is **"that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world."** Look at Vs. 3... **"And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads."** Notice that the dragon is red (the color of blood), has 7 heads and 10 horns, reminding us of the world empires in the book of Daniel. The dragon temporarily rules the earth through the kingdoms of this world.

Now, look what happens to the child... vs. 5 says... **"And her Child was caught up to God and His throne."** John is compacting the entire life and ministry of Jesus Christ into 3 events... He was born, and then He was resurrected and ascended into heaven.

In this version of the Christmas story He goes from being born at Bethlehem, to ruling on the throne of the universe. It skips the whole middle part of His life. Why? Because the whole point of the Christmas story isn't just that He was born. It's what He came to DO after He was born. Jesus was born into the world for the specific purpose of being the KING of the world!

Now what does all that have to do with the 'war behind all wars'? Look at vs. 7 and 8 with me..." **And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer."** This Christmas Story has an angel, but he's not the angel Gabriel who announces the birth of Christ. It's a different angel. This angel's name is Michael. In the OT he's the guardian angel of Israel. So this war has to do with God's people. And the war is between Michael (rep. God) and the dragon (Satan). So 2 arch-angels and their angelic armies are locked in battle... and guess who wins... Michael! How? Glad you asked, because that's the point of the whole vision.

The war in heaven is won through an event that happened on earth... through the birth of a child. Through the preaching, teaching, and healing ministry that that child would have when He grew up. The war is won through the death and resurrection of that child turned man. The war in heaven has been won on earth through the life of a child and the victory started on the day He was born! No wonder heaven cries out in a loud voice in 12:10... **"Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down."**

From heaven's pt. of view... THAT'S what Christmas is all about! THAT is why the angels get so excited! Because Satan has been defeated! Rev. 12 tells us that the **'devil is thrown down'** 6 different times! It's almost like He's rubbing it in! He's down!

1...2...3...4...5...6...and He's out! He was thrown from the 'throne' room! At one point in Jesus ministry, Jesus sends out 70 disciples and when they return they say with joy, **"Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."** -Luke 10:17.

Jesus responded by saying in vs. 18... **"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."** But then he quickly added, **"Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."** In otherwords, the devil got thrown out of heaven, and we go enrolled into heaven... all because the woman gave birth to the child!

So if all that's true, then why are things so bad? I'll tell you why...BECAUSE THE DEVIL IS TICKED OFF! vs. 12 of chap 12 tells us... **"For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."** In otherwords, he's hopping mad because it's the 4th quarter, the 2 min. warning just sounded ... and he's losing! You think the devil doesn't know the score? Sure he does! He knows what's coming! He knows that Jesus is coming back better than most Christians! He knows he's already lost, but misery loves company and that's why he's so busy making sure that he takes as many people with him to hell as he can possibly get!

So all the evil in the world isn't a sign of the devils victory, it's a sign that he realizes he's defeated! He doesn't want the 'child of Bethlehem' to be King! He knows that he's no longer in the manger... He's on the throne! So he figures if he can't kill the child, maybe he can discourage God's people and keep others from coming to Christ.

Then, since he can't get the child, the dragon goes after what is dearest to the child. He goes after the woman... the people of God! READ vs. 13... **"Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child."** Vs. 17 says that **"the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."** If you're a Christian this morning... that means YOU!

If you keep God's commands and confess that you belong to Jesus, you can be sure that you're also a target of the devil this Christmas morning. In his rage he's going to attack you with a flood of condemnations and accusations. In 12:10 John calls him, **"the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night,"** The word Satan in the Hebrew means 'accuser'. So don't be surprised when he takes your sins and continually throws them in your face... trying to convince you that you're no good! That God could never love you!

Now against this flood of accusation, John promises us that we can overcome. In 12:11 he says, **"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death."**

According to that verse, we overcome by doing 3 things...1st we have to...

## **1. ACCEPT the blood of the lamb...**

The blood of the lamb is the blood of Jesus. In the OT an innocent lamb was sacrificed to symbolically pay for peoples sin. It illustrated the fact that sin is so destructive, so caustic... that when we sin... the price is blood, the penalty is death.

Jesus was the perfect lamb of God. Only a perfect God could die for others... and so the perfect Son of God, paid for our sin with His life blood.

I heard recently of a woman who was out Christmas shopping with her two children. After hours of looking at row after row of toys. And after hours of hearing both her children ask for everything they saw... she finally made it to the elevator.

She was feeling what so many of us feel during the holiday season... overwhelming pressure to go to every party, & get that perfect gift for every single person on our shopping list. Finally the elevator doors opened and there was already a crowd in the car. She pushed her way into the elevator dragging her two kids, with her arms full of bags. When the doors closed she couldn't take it anymore! She blurted out... "Whoever started this whole Christmas thing should be found, strung up, and shot!"

There was a short pause and then, from the back of the elevator everyone heard a quiet calm voice respond, "Don't worry we already crucified him." For the rest of the trip down, you could've heard a pin drop! In the midst of all the hustle and bustle of Christmas, it's wise to remember that it was Jesus who started this whole Christmas 'thing', and for a very good reason! So that our sins would be forgiven in full! Without him, we wouldn't have a reason for gift giving and families gathering together.

See, in a sense, Satan, the accuser is right... we have sinned and we are sinners. But he's also wrong! Because that's not the end of the story... Jesus is the end of the story. He is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

The 2nd way to defeat the devil at Christmas is to...

## **2. LIVE the way of the truth**

Vs. 11 says that they... **"overcame him...by the word of their testimony."**

They overcame him by speaking the truth and living the truth. We give the devil a black-eye when we seek to live lives of complete integrity. When the person at church is the same person at work or in the home.

When there's no hidden areas in our lives... then we can defeat the devil because he doesn't have anything to accuse us with. If he wants to get us... he has to make things up! And that's when we know we've got him beat!

## **3. DON'T FEAR the threat of death**

John says that the devil is defeated when not even the fear of death can stop us!

Maybe you have heard the story of "Nicholas of Myra" (or Smyrna) ... you might know him today as "St. Nicholas". Believe it or not, the myth has some truth to it! Nicholas became the Bishop or pastor of Myra and from 270 to 343 A.D. On Feb.23, 303 A.D Roman Emperor Diocletian issued an edict that launched one of the most systematic and prolonged persecutions that the church has ever known.

The edict demanded that Christians turn over their bibles and other holy books to be burned. To refuse meant death. Bishop Nichoas was caught early in the persecution and imprisoned. While there they beat him, branded his skin, used iron pliers to pinch sensitive parts of his body, and then left him in his cell until his wounds healed enough to start the process all over again. This kept up for years... but St. Nick... refused to deny that Jesus was and is God.

How can you stop people like that? You can't! In this age of cushy, comfy Christianity... if we expect to stop the devil at his own game, like believers of old...

...we have to be willing to suffer any inconvenience, put up with any hardship, make any sacrifice in order to further the cause of Christ in our world. It's the attitude of any true follower of Christ.

See, to the committed Christian, death isn't the last word... The last word comes from God... "Well done, good and faithful servant." To people like St. Nick and millions of others who have committed their lives to Christ. Death isn't the worst thing that can happen... the worst thing to happen would be to turn your back on Jesus. Evil is overcome when we don't let anything or anyone intimidate us from living for God, even the threat of death!

Which leads to... "The Christ Claus"...

"In putting on Christ and entering into a relationship with said Savior, the wearer waives any and all rights to previous identity, real or implied, and fully accepts the rights and responsibilities of being a Christ-tian beyond death or such time as wearer is raptured."