

# Not So Silent Night

Every year as we remember the birth of Jesus, we sing this song “Silent Night.”

And in that song we are reminded of the shepherds quaking at the sight of the angels as they announce the birth of Christ...which is then leads to heavenly hosts (angels) singing Alleluia! The scriptures say it was a multitude a great mass so big you couldn't count them...all praising God!

Then there's this mention of this Round Yon Virgin...when I was younger I thought it was Round Young Virgin. Like man...she musta been big and that's kind of rude.

(round yon is like saying “around, over there” so...all is calm, all is bright around that young virgin mother over there and her child)

So you've got the shepherds freaking out, this mass of angels singing...and this young woman giving birth for the first time...clearly it was a silent night...

How many of you men “quaked” as your wife was having the baby? It's not usually calm and bright! There can be yelling, possibly some accusations (“you did this to me!”), some scratching and clawing (how many men still have scars?), and then the bone crushing grip on every push just so we get a little taste of the pain...silent night...

Then the baby is born, crying! But then after that...everyone is worn out, full of joy, and holding that beautiful sleeping baby...all is calm...all is bright

And I guess THIS is where the song picks up. It's an aftermath song reflecting on the good, on this tender and mild infant, Son of God, love's pure light...silent night.

This moment is revered and depicted in manger scenes all over the world this time of year. It's such a heartwarming scene.

But this morning we're going to look at another side of the Christmas story. One that is rarely told but it's just as real. One that speaks of conflict and battle. So this morning our “manger scene” takes place in the heavens...with a woman, a child, and a dragon...this is what I call a Not So Silent Night.

Turn to Revelation chapter 12. For those who do not know, Revelation is a prophetic letter of events that Jesus revealed by an angel to John. It is full of imagery and figurative language. So while we typically take the Word literally, this is one of the instances where we do not.

So it takes study and connecting the dots to other scriptures to fully understand what the meaning is of each passage. I could spend weeks on this one chapter so I won't be explaining everything today, just what is relevant for this morning.

**Revelation 12:1-2 (HCSB)**

A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of 12 stars on her head. 2 She was pregnant and cried out in labor and agony as she was about to give birth.

Say "A great sign." John saw with his eyes and perceived with his mind, this miraculous vision from heaven. Some of you are intrigued, others are looking for the magi and shepherds. But this is so important to the Christmas story.

These 2 verses basically sum up the entire Old Testament.

We have this woman, and the assumption in a Christmas message is that it is Mary, but it's not. This woman is clothed with the sun, moon under her feet, a crown of 12 stars...pretty wild, huh?

In the OT there was a boy named Joseph who had a dream. A dream that the sun, moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to him. The sun (Jacob), the moon (Rachel), 12 stars (Joseph and his brothers, the 12 tribes of Israel)

This woman represents Israel, God's chosen people. And she's pregnant. There's a sense of promise. Think about what it's like when a woman is pregnant ...there's expectation and hope. There is a sense of longing and counting down...waiting.

And this is what happens in the history of Israel. God promises that He will send the Messiah through Israel. This promise appears all the way back in Genesis 3 with Abraham when God tells him that through him, all the world will be blessed.

These promise continues all through the scriptures...continued expectation and hope for the coming of the Messiah. All of the scripture points to Jesus!

So there's expectation and hope, but there's also labor pain. (how many women are having flashbacks right now? Men don't hold their hand...).

"She was pregnant and cried out in labor and agony as she was about to give birth."

This speaks of Israel's stormy and painful history. It's like they had the side effects of the pregnancy with sleepless nights, bloating, indigestion, cramping...this is the backstory of Christmas. This is the setup for the story of Mary and Joseph and the birth of Jesus. It's not a random happening. You can trace His coming back to the beginning of time (ours, not God's)

**Revelation 12:3-4 (HCSB)**

Then another sign appeared in heaven: There was a great fiery red dragon having seven heads and 10 horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. 4 His tail swept away a third of the stars in heaven and hurled them to the earth. And the dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she did give birth he might devour her child.

While Jesus was born and things were calm and bright on the earth, there was a war behind the scenes. It was the continuation of a spiritual war that intensifies with the birth of Jesus.

See if Israel is a pregnant woman who would bring for the Messiah, it only makes sense that Satan would continue to attack her and try to destroy her. Because if he could destroy Israel, how would the Messiah come?

Pharaoh tried to kill all the babies but praise God, Moses was rescued from the river. Harman planned to kill all the Jews in the book of Esther. If satan could wipe out the line, the Messiah could not be born.

This conflict continued into the life of Jesus. How many times do we see His life threatened in the gospels? Herod tried to kill all the male babies after Jesus' birth. The religious leaders were constantly trying to trick Jesus and plotted to kill him.

But it's no surprise. We were told about the conflict long before Jesus' birth.

**Genesis 3:15 (HCSB)**

I will put hostility between you and the woman,  
and between your seed and her seed.  
He will strike your head,  
and you will strike his heel.

Christmas is about a battle. This dragon (satan) and his schemes to destroy God's people and the One who came to save them! So what happens in this battle? This next verse covers the entire earthly life of Jesus...beginning to end.

**Revelation 12:5 (HCSB)**

But she gave birth to a Son—a male who is going to shepherd all nations with an iron scepter—and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.

Jesus is born then He ascends to heaven. It's a reminder that Jesus came for a purpose. He wasn't born so we could forever worship a baby (as great as that is).

He was born to die. He came to save. And when you think of a baby in Bethlehem, you need to think of a man at Calvary. (I know that's what Easter is for).

But the man at Calvary is a war hero. One man, single handedly won the war of wars. He defeated hell, death, and the grave when He paid the price for our sin and rose from the grave!

And while He's already victorious in the war, the battle rages on. Until that day when Jesus returns to rule with that iron scepter!

**Revelation 12:7-9 (HCSB)**

Then war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels also fought, 8 but he could not prevail, and there was no place for them in heaven any longer. 9 So the great dragon was thrown out—the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the one who deceives the whole world. He was thrown to earth, and his angels with him.

Satan was defeated by the Jesus at the cross and the full manifestation of that defeat will be seen openly here!

**Colossians 2:15 (HCSB)**

He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; He triumphed over them by Him.

**John 12:31-32 (HCSB)**

Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. 32 As for Me, if I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all people to Myself.”

The heavenly response to this war in the spirit...

**Revelation 12:10-12 (HCSB)**

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:

The salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Messiah have now come, because the accuser of our brothers has been thrown out: the one who accuses them before our God day and night.

11 They conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not love their lives in the face of death.

12 Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the earth and the sea, for the Devil has come down to you with great fury, because he knows he has a short time.

Salvation. Power. Kingdom. Authority. Messiah have now come!

This battle that raged in the heavens around the nativity scene events now rages here on the earth.

Have you ever wondered why Christianity is the only religion that it's "OK" to speak against, restrict, mock, put down? It's because Satan is warring against the only one with the power to defeat Him. And His name is Jesus. Satan hates Jesus and every person who confesses His name.

But we have Salvation. Power. Kingdom. Authority. In Jesus!

Again, I know this is not a "normal" Christmas message but we NEED this piece of the story. It puts the Christmas events in context. The manger, the magi, the shepherds are only part of the story.

We can't only picture the angels that deliver the good news to Mary and Joseph and later to the shepherds. We have to remember the angels that are warring in the heavens AS WE SPEAK.

This passage in Revelation reminds us that Christmas is part of a much larger, longer story that goes way back in time and its climax is the victory at the cross and the grave.

The story of the manger is one act in a larger drama...and the story isn't just about Jesus...it's about US.

What's really happening in our lives, in this world.

What Jesus has done and will do.

What we have done and will do.

We are caught in a spiritual struggle, and that the baby who is born in Bethlehem wins. He rules the nations with an iron scepter. And if you read on, you find that Satan loses. He is active, but his time is short. Revelation reminds us of who ultimately wins.

What I like most about this message is that it calls for a response.

If a baby's born, it doesn't call for too much of a response. You can admire the baby, give a few gifts, and then hand the baby back. It's not your problem. A baby doesn't call for much of a response.

And if we only see Jesus as a baby, then it doesn't have much of an impact on our lives.

But we have Salvation. Power. Kingdom. Authority. In Jesus!