

# Westwood Baptist Church Grounded. Growing. Going.

Worship Guide for December 24, 2023

## Sermon Notes

### **Bethlehem's Unseen Battle - The Violent Nativity**

Revelation 12:1-12

Eugene Peterson says this about Revelation 12: “This is not the nativity story we grew up with, but it is the nativity story all the same”. The birth of Jesus was a war-time birth. We don’t see this reality depicted in the quiet peaceful scenes of our Christmas nativities where it seems “all is calm, all is bright”.

Some commentators refer to Revelation 12 as an “**apocalyptic Christmas story**”. In this violent nativity, there is an expectant mother - a soon-to-be-born baby, a powerful evil dragon waits to devour that child. Instead of praising God and announcing, “peace on earth”, heaven’s angels are fighting a war against Satan and his angels. And while Revelation will end with the eternal destruction of the dragon, that inevitable end is delayed, and until then - because Satan knows his time is short - he rages against those “*who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.*” (12:17)

In reality, what is unfolding in the birth of Christ is a spiritual battle. It is an all-out assault “not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12). “The incarnation of the Son was nothing less than a declaration of war on Satan and his demonic forces...heaven was anything but peaceful when the Son was born, lived, died, rose, and was caught up to heaven in ascension and exaltation.” D. Akin

Heaven’s Perspective of Christmas: A War-time Birth (Revelation 12:1-6)

Heaven’s Victory Over the Accuser: Satan is Thrown Down (Revelation 12:7-11)

Heaven’s Assurance For Those in Christ: We Are Overcomers Through Him (Revelation 12:12)

## Life Group Preparation Guide

"Let the *Word* of Christ *dwell* in you(all) *richly*  
*teaching* and *admonishing* one another in all *wisdom*..."

- *Colossians 3:16a*

### Focus #1: GOD

1. What does this passage reveal about the character or nature of God?
2. What does this passage reveal about God's eternal plans and purposes?
3. What does this passage reveal about how God interacts with his creation?

### Focus #2: ME

4. How does this passage reveal sin in my own mind, heart, or life?
5. In what ways does this passage help us to see how we need to be aligned with God's will?
6. What is one tangible and measurable way that the Spirit is leading me to respond to his Word?

### Focus #3: OTHERS

7. What is one truth that I can share meaningfully with someone, and with whom?
8. How can I specifically encourage someone or everyone in my Life Group from this passage?

Three contributions (reflections, questions, observations, etc.) I plan to include in our next Life Group discussion:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

#### Westwood Staff

**Gerald Hodges:** Lead Pastor  
**Jonathan Taylor:** Associate Pastor  
**Jason Engle:** Pastor of Students  
& Discipleship

**Yvonne Hager:** Executive Assistant

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#### DECEMBER

**ALL MONTH** - Lottie Moon Christmas  
Offering & Lottie Moon Post Office

24 Candlelight Service @ 6:00pm  
25-26 Church Office Closed  
31 Worship Service ONLY @ 10:30am

#### JANUARY

1 Happy New Year - Church Office Closed  
10 Life Group Kick Off @ 6:00pm