

The Christmas Dragon

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[0 : 00] But if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read. Revelation chapter 12. Revelation chapter 12.

I want us to look at different sections of the chapter, but if we just read again from the beginning. It's page 1034. Revelation chapter 12.

We'll read from the beginning. And a great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.

She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. And another sign appeared in heaven. Behold, a great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, and on his head seven diadems.

His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child, he might devour it.

[1 : 13] And so on. You know, one of the things I love about this time of year are the Christmas adverts that are on the TV.

As you know, adverts, they're usually very annoying and they get in the way of watching our favorite TV programs. But at Christmas, there are great adverts on the TV. Some are sad, some are silly, and some are just very, very stupid.

But there's one Christmas advert that always sticks in my mind when I think about Christmas adverts. And it was a Christmas advert that actually came out a number of years ago. It was done by John Lewis and Waitrose.

And it was an advert about an excitable little dragon called Edgar. Edgar the dragon. Where Edgar the fire-breathing dragon, he was, if you watch the advert, he nearly destroyed Christmas by accidentally melting a snowman, then dissolving a whole ice rink, and then setting fire to the town Christmas tree.

But when he set fire to a Waitrose Christmas pudding, Edgar the fire-breathing dragoness, the advert, says he saved Christmas. It's a great advert.

[2 : 23] If you've never seen it, you'll have to watch it. But you know, it always got me thinking when seeing the advert, who came up with the idea of a Christmas dragon?

Because, you know, there's not only an advert about a Christmas dragon, there's also a movie about a Christmas dragon. But then you ask the question, well, what does a dragon have to do with Christmas?

Because is Christmas not all about peace on earth and goodwill towards all men? Is Christmas not all about tinsel and trees and candles and carols and gifts and gatherings and food and families? Is Christmas not all about these things? What does a dragon have to do with Christmas? Or the nativity? Or even the birth of Jesus? Who came up with the idea of a Christmas dragon?

And of course, the adverts and all the movies about the Christmas dragon, they want nothing to do with Jesus. They always want to point us to the magic of Christmas. But when we come to Revelation chapter 12, we see that the Christmas dragon, it actually originates from the Bible.

[3 : 32] And so all these adverts that we see, everything they're basing it on, actually originates from Revelation chapter 12. And yet, our Bible tells us and teaches us that the Christmas dragon is not all about the magic of Christmas.

No, the Christmas dragon is all about Jesus and the miracle of the incarnation. The Christmas dragon is not about the magic of Jesus. The Christmas dragon is all about the miracle of the incarnation.

And so I want us to think about this Christmas dragon this morning. And I want us to think about it under three headings, three simple headings. The seed of the woman, the serpent of wickedness,

and the saviour of the world.

The seed of the woman, the serpent of wickedness, and the saviour of the world. So first of all, we see the seed of the woman. The seed of the woman.

Look at verse 1. We see there a great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.

[4 : 40] She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. Now, with all its imagery and illustrations, all its signs and symbolism, even all the prophecies and promises about the end of the world, for many people, the book of Revelation is a closed book.

But the thing is, the book of Revelation is not a closed book. It is, as it says in its title, it's a book of Revelation. It's an apocalypse.

It's an apocalypse. It's a revelation. It's not a book of revelations, plural. It's a book of Revelation, singular. It's one long revelation.

And we've, as I mentioned, this is what we've been studying this whole year, chapters 1 to 11 of the book of Revelation. And this book of Revelation, it's a revelation from Jesus Christ, about Jesus Christ, and it's for us as the church of Jesus Christ.

And the book of Revelation, it's the last book of the Bible, but it's a book that was written and recorded towards the end of the first century. Because at the time, the church of Jesus, it was being persecuted.

[5 : 55] In fact, all of the apostles, they had been executed for their faith in Jesus Christ. All of them had been executed except for the author of this letter, this book, the apostle John.

John had been exiled to the Greek island of Patmos. And while John was praying on the Lord's day, John received this revelation of Jesus Christ.

He received a revelation of Jesus as the risen, ruling, and reigning king who is one day going to return. And this revelation was important because the church needed to be reminded and reassured to remain focused and to remain faithful to Jesus in the midst of opposition and obstacles to the gospel.

The church was being reminded, as we said so often on a Wednesday evening, they were being reminded to stop looking inwards and start looking upwards. That's the whole message of the book of Revelation.

Stop looking inwards. Start looking upwards. Look to the one who is seated on the throne. And, you know, that's what's gradually and gloriously revealed to us in this revelation.

[7 : 08] Now, as we saw in our study, chapters 1 to 11, we saw that the book of Revelation, it's full of sevens. Seven is the number of perfection. In chapters 1 to 3 of Revelation, there are seven letters to seven churches.

In chapters 4 to 7, there are seven seals upon a sovereign scroll. And then in chapters 8 to 11, there are seven angels with seven trumpets. And so when we come to chapter 12, which we're looking at this morning, chapter 12 is a chapter full of more imagery, more illustrations, more prophecies, more promises, more signs, and more symbolism.

That's what we read. Right from verse 1, it says, A great sign appeared in heaven. A woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head, a crown of 12 stars.

She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. There's the first sign in chapter 12. Now, throughout history, the Roman Catholic Church has claimed and confessed that this woman is none other than the Virgin Mary.

This is the Virgin Mary. And, you know, while many Reformed theologians would want to discount and discredit anything that the Roman Catholic Church has to say, especially when it comes to the veneration of the Virgin Mary, yet their interpretation of this woman in Revelation chapter 12, it isn't entirely wrong.

[8 : 44] because the Virgin Mary is certainly included here. She's certainly implied as the woman in Revelation 12. But she's only part of the story.

Mary is only part of the story because this story of this woman in Revelation chapter 12, it doesn't begin here. It doesn't begin at the birth of Jesus either.

It doesn't begin at the last book of the Bible. It begins way back in the book of beginnings, in the book of Genesis. Because the book of Genesis, as you know, it sets before us God's perfectly planned story of salvation.

It's His story. It's history. It's His story. And as you know, in the beginning, if you go to the book of Genesis, right to the beginning of your Bible, you'll see that that story, the story of history, it doesn't begin with pain and persecution.

The story begins as a story of perfection and purity. It's a story of godliness and there's glory. It's a story of happiness and holiness.

[9 : 56] Where God spoke this world into being by the word of His power. He creates everything that we can see in the space of six days and all very good. And as you know, into that garden of godliness and glory, God placed two people as the climax and culmination of His creation.

He placed Adam and Eve who were king and queen of God's creation. They were placed there to rule and to reign in God's world.

They were to have dominion over all the creatures and they were to rule and reign with perfect knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. And that's why we see there in verse one that this woman in Revelation, she's clothed with the sun, the moon, and the stars.

She's made in the same period as the creation was made because she's part of that creative process whereby God clothes the whole of creation with His own glory and His own majesty.

And so we see that the woman being pictured and portrayed to us here in Revelation 12 is not so much the Virgin Mary but Eve. Eve, the mother of all living.

[11 : 12] And what we read about Eve in verse two is that she was pregnant. But not only pregnant, she's crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth.

Which should immediately bring us to Genesis 3. Genesis chapter 3 and the curse of sin. Because when Adam and Eve, the king and queen of creation, when they succumbed to the seduction of Satan in the garden of Eden, as you know, the entire creation, it plunged and was plummeted into a world of sin and misery.

Because when sin entered, it brought with it, well, it brought with it all the things that we see around us each and every day. It brought with it strife. Sickness, suffering, sorrow, and separation.

That's what happened in the garden. All these things were brought in then and God cursed His creation. And then He said to the woman, Genesis 3, in pain you shall bring forth children.

In pain you shall bring forth children. But you know, my friend, when the pain of sin and death entered in, in Genesis 3, so too did the story of salvation.

[12 : 36] God didn't leave us. He didn't abandon us. He didn't say, scrap it, I'm done with these people. No, He gave to us the story of salvation. And that story, it began with the promise.

The promise of a seed, son, and Savior. Savior. The story of salvation began with the promise of a seed, son, and Savior. That the seed of the woman will come and crush the head of the serpent.

And it's all there in the Bible. Genesis 3, that the seed of the woman will come and crush the head of the serpent. And with that story, or with that promise, the story of salvation began to follow this golden thread woven throughout the whole of history.

And you can follow it. You follow it through the pages of your Bible, this golden thread walking through the pages of history. And what's amazing is that our Bible, the whole purpose of the Bible is that it follows this promise.

The promise of a seed, son, and Savior. It follows the line and lineage of this promised seed, son, and Savior from the woman all the way to the time of Jesus.

[13 : 47] And what we see in Jesus is that He is the promised seed, son, and Savior who has come to crush the head of the serpent.

He is the promised seed, son, and Savior who has come to crush the head of the serpent. But before we come to see the Savior of the world, I want us to see this serpent.

Who is the serpent? He has come to crush. That's what we see secondly, the serpent of wickedness. So in this chapter about the Christmas dragon, we see the seed of the woman and then we see the serpent of wickedness.

He's introduced in verse 3. The serpent of wickedness. We're told there another sign appeared in heaven. Behold, a great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and on his heads seven diadems.

His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth and the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth so that when she bore her child he might devour it.

[14 : 58] Now when we come to the book of Revelation, I said this often on a Wednesday evening, we're not to be sidetracked and sidelined by all the signs and all the symbolism because they're all

there to express and even sometimes to explain the meaning and the message of the book of Revelation.

And so when we're told in verse 3 that this, it says there, behold, so that's where to stop and look at this, think about it, behold, a great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and on his heads seven diadems.

And from that we can determine that this serpent or this dragon was in fact the same serpent in the garden of Eden who deceived the woman.

He is the serpent of wickedness. And just how wicked he was is emphasized by the fact that he's red. As we said to the children, red is the color of danger.

So he's depicted and described as a dangerous dragon. He's a dangerous dragon. More than that, we're told he has seven heads, ten horns and seven diadems.

[16:08] Now you can't really imagine in your mind what that would actually look like. But it's all symbolism. It's all signs. Because as we said earlier, the book of Revelation, it's a book full of sevens.

It's a book full of sevens. You read through the book of Revelation, you'll see that mentioned throughout it, there's seven lampstands, seven stars, seven churches, seven spirits, seven torches, seven horns, seven eyes, seven angels, seven thunders, seven trumpets, seven vials of wrath, seven mountains, seven kings.

There's all these sevens because seven is the number of perfection. But there's also mentioned here the number ten, which is the number of completeness. And you know, throughout the book of Revelation, you'll see the number seven and the number ten appearing in order to emphasize or to symbolize the perfect and complete holiness of heaven.

Most of the time in the book of Revelation, it's emphasizing the perfect and complete holiness of heaven. But here, the opposite is true.

because number seven and the number ten seek to symbolize the perfect and complete hellishness of the serpent of wickedness.

[17:27] The number seven and the number ten, number seven perfect, number ten complete, they symbolize the perfect and complete hellishness of this serpent of wickedness.

Behold a great red dragon. With seven heads, ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. And you know, I stress this point because I don't think we realize how dangerous and how deceptive this dragon really is.

I don't think we realize how subtle and how sneaky this serpent of wickedness is. In his commentary, Joel Beakey to an American theologian, he writes, today many people, even some who call themselves Christians, they joke about the devil.

But he says, Satan, no doubt, rejoices in such foolishness. He is no laughing matter. He wants us to forget that he is the wily one who is the sworn enemy of Christ and all who belong to him.

And you know, my friend, I don't think we realize, I don't think we think about it enough, just how dangerous, how deceptive the Christmas dragon really is. He's described to us later in the chapter in verse 9, he's described as the ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.

[19:01] He's the serpent who deceived Adam and Eve, king and queen, king Adam and queen Eve. He deceived them at the beginning and they were perfect. They had perfect knowledge, righteousness and holiness and he'd managed to deceive them and he's still the same serpent who seeks to deceive us now.

He's the deceiver of the whole world. He's the enemy of your soul and you know, I don't think we think about that enough. He's the enemy of your soul. He has more faces than a dice and more names than we care to know because throughout the Bible, you study your Bible and you'll see that this serpent of wickedness, he has so many names.

He's described as the devil, the diabolos, the divider. He's regarded as Satan, the adversary. He's the accuser of the brethren. He will accuse us and say to us that you never become a Christian because you're too sinful.

He's the father of lies. The Bible says he has been the liar, a liar from the very beginning, right there in the Garden of Eden. He was a liar and a murderer from the beginning.

He's Beelzebub. He's the Antichrist. He's the prince of the power of the air. He's the prince of darkness. He's the prince of demons. He's the god of this age.

[20 : 23] He is described in an earlier chapter as the angel of the bottomless pit. He's Abaddon. He's Apollyon, which means destroyer because his aim and objective, believe it or not, is to destroy.

He wants to destroy the Christian and the church of Jesus Christ. He is Lucifer. He is the light bearer. He's described to us in our Bible as the leader of all the fallen angels who were cast by the Lord out of heaven and down to hell.

And he appears before us as an angel of light to deceive and to delude and to divert our attention away from following Jesus.

In fact, someone once said about this Christmas dragon, and I hesitated to quote it, but I thought, well, why not? He says about the Christmas dragon, at Christmas, Satan deceives and diverts our attention away from Jesus by promoting a figure who is an anagram of his name.

Quite some statement. At Christmas, Satan deceives and diverts our attention away from Jesus by promoting a figure who is an anagram of his name.

[21 : 49] And that's what our Bible teaches us, is it not? The God of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the glory of Jesus Christ.

We are to see the light of the gospel. But he diverts our attention, he distracts our minds, he darkens our eyes. And you know, you might be thinking to yourself sitting here this morning, you might be thinking, Murdo, Murdo, Murdo.

You are not very Christmassy this morning. You're not really full of the festive cheer today. But you know, my friend, I come to this chapter and I see in this chapter the real reason for the season.

This is the reality for the rescue. We needed to be rescued from the darkness of this world because Jesus Christ, he came into this world to save sinners sitting in darkness under the power of darkness, under the authority of the prince of darkness.

And Jesus Christ, the reason for this season is he came to seek us and to save us and to bring us from darkness into his most marvelous light.

[23 : 10] He came to rescue us, he came to redeem lost sinners from the grip and from the grasp of this serpent of wickedness. Because this dragon, this Christmas dragon, this perfectly and completely hellish serpent, Satan, he had a desire and a determination to crush the seed of the woman as soon as he was born.

That's what we read. He tried to do it. We read there in verse 4, His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth and the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth so that when she bore her child, he might devour it.

And you know, we always read the narratives of the birth story, don't we, at this time of year? And you remember at the birth of Jesus, Satan used Herod. He used Herod to issue this command, a command to the whole of Israel to let all the little boys in Bethlehem be killed.

There was Satan behind it all. My friend, Satan, the serpent of wickedness, he had this desire and determination to crush the seed of the woman. And he has a desire and determination to crush you. Does not want you to believe in this, this Savior of sinners. He doesn't want you to believe in the Savior of sinners.

[24 : 45] But he doesn't succeed. Why? Because God has a perfect plan and a perfect promise. And you know, it's a wonderful promise.

A seed, son and Savior will come. He will crush the head of the serpent. He will crush the head of the serpent. And so in this chapter about the Christmas dragon, we see the seed of the woman. We see the serpent of wickedness. And then lastly and briefly, we see the Savior of the world. He's the main character in the story. The Savior of the world.

We read there in verse 5, she gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron. But her child was caught up to God and to His throne.

And the woman fled into the wilderness. But she has a place prepared by God in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

[25 : 45] You know, the perfect plan and promise of a seed, son and Savior who would come to crush the head of the serpent. That perfect plan, that perfect promise that was given way back in the book of Genesis, Genesis chapter 3, that perfect plan came to fruition when the seed of the woman gives birth to the son.

And throughout history, as we said, the Bible, it follows the line, it follows the lineage from the seed of the woman, Eve, all the way through to the Virgin Mary. And what's amazing about that seed,

what's amazing about the line and lineage of Jesus is that in order to produce a son, and we're going to think about this this evening, so come back this evening and we'll think about it more. We're going to look at Jesus' family tree, the line all the way through to Jesus, the line and lineage of Jesus. But what we notice here and what's mentioned here is that this son, this baby who is born, he's sovereign.

He's a king. In fact, he's the king of kings. We're told he would rule with a rod of iron, which is prophesied in Psalm 2. We'll sing it in a moment.

So he's going to rule with a rod of iron. But not only that, Psalm 2, it also emphasizes to us that he's the only begotten son. He's the one who was anointed and appointed to be the savior of sinners.

[27 : 14] And as you know, and as we were saying to the children, they called his name Jesus because his name means savior. His name means salvation.

He's come to save us. To save us from what? To save us from the grip and the grasp of Satan, but also to save us from the grip and the grasp of sin.

The angel said to Mary, call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins. Call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins.

And what I love about this chapter, it says there in verse 10, And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come.

For the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down who accuses them day and night before our God. I don't know if you noticed, but the phrase thrown down, thrown down, it's repeatedly used to describe what Jesus does to the Christmas dragon.

[28 : 23] Jesus throws him down. We read there in verse 9, And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan and the deceiver of the world.

He was thrown down to the earth and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, Now the salvation and power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down who accuses them day and night and night before our God.

And then verse 13, And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. The phrase thrown down, it's repeatedly used to describe the Christmas dragon being defeated and destroyed by the seed of the woman who was the saviour of the world.

He was to be thrown down because according to God's perfect plan, God's perfect promise, a seed son and saviour would come into this world to crush the head of the serpent.

And how would he do it? How would he do it? We're told in this chapter, he's going to conquer the Christmas dragon by the blood of the lamb.

[29 : 40] That's how he does it. The seed son and saviour is going to conquer the Christmas dragon by the blood of the lamb, his own blood upon the cruel cross at Calvary.

And that's the glory of the gospel. Here in the book of Revelation, the glory of the gospel is that Jesus Christ came into the world to deal with sin, to destroy the power of death, and to defeat Satan.

Jesus Christ came into the world to deal with sin, destroy death, and defeat Satan. And this morning, the beauty is that the Christ of Christmas, the reason for the season, the one whom it's all about, he calls you to follow him, to simply follow him.

Because he's the one who has slain the Christmas dragon. He's the one who has slain the Christmas dragon. And my friend, Jesus is the reason for the season.

And you know, I just want to say this in conclusion. There was an evangelist, there's still an evangelist, he's called Glenn Scrivener. He responded to that advert.

[30 : 59] Remember the advert I mentioned by John Lewis and Waitrose about Edgar, the excitable Christmas dragon. Glenn Scrivener, the evangelist, he responded responded by producing his own little video, his own little advert about the real Christmas dragon.

And I put it into this week's notices, if you care to look at it, you can look at it after the service. But in his own little advert, he's produced a poem. And it's a poem called There's a Dragon in My Nativity. There's a Dragon in My Nativity. I'd encourage you to watch it, but I'll just conclude with his poem. Fascinating poem. There's a dragon in My Nativity, dreadful and immense.

The shepherds quake, the wise men shake, and spill their frankincense. The cattle are a-loing, and the baby is awake. While Joseph and Mary tremble, oh, there must be some mistake.

There's a dragon over Bethlehem. I don't know how he came. I didn't think a donkey could have borne the dragon's frame. I don't believe the senses had been called for such as him.

[32 : 11] And I'm certain that when dragon knocked, no room was at the inn. There's a dragon at the stable. I don't know why he's there. He hasn't brought a present. He only seems to glare.

He hovers over David's town, yet still beneath him lies. Yet no one's sleep is dreamless underneath his piercing eyes. This dragon is invisible with ordinary sight.

You cannot snap a selfie or televise his flight. Unseen he stands for every power that stands against the earth. Death, disease, and darkness overshadowing each birth.

This dragon, he says, is an enemy of all that's good and true. This monster lies and steals and kills. He's coming after you. Above each crib the dragon hovers, sure to swallow whole.

Rulers, empires, beauty, joy, a flesh and blood black hole. But dragons always meet their match. They always meet their doom. The hero rises to the fight to cast them into gloom.

[33 : 15] And so at this nativity arose another player. The baby wrapped in swaddling cloths. He was a dragon slayer. Come to fight through Herod's plots, through dangers big and small, he took on evil, sickness, death, and triumphed over all.

A dragon or a baby, just who would win the fight? It wasn't really fair, you see. The dragon, the child, was a knight. From high above and long before, he knew what must be done.

He knew the dragon waiting here, and still he chose to come. There's a dragon in my nativity, a fierce and monstrous danger, but fiercer still the bravery and love within the manger.

There's a dragon in my nativity, a fierce and monstrous danger, but fiercer still the bravery and love within the manger.

My friend, the Christmas dragon, it's not about the magic of Christmas. It's about the miracle of the incarnation, because according to the perfect plan and promise of God, a seed, son, and saviour, came into this world to crush the head of the Christmas dragon, to conquer him.

[34 : 36] And they called the dragon slayer's name, they called him Jesus. Why? So that he would save his people from their sins.

And today, Jesus calls us all simply to come and to follow him, to come and follow him.

Amen. Let us pray. Oh Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee for thy word that reveals to us the truth.

And sometimes it's a truth we don't want to hear, a truth sometimes we want to put aside. but Lord, we pray that today the devil wouldn't win, that we would take the truth of God's word, that we would claim it and confess it and know that it is ours, that we would have confidence in it, that it speaks about Jesus, a wonderful dragon slayer, one who was able to defeat death, to defeat Satan and even sin itself.

And Lord, we pray that we would trust in him, we would hear his voice speaking to us in the gospel, calling us to come to him and to follow him. Bless us, Lord, together we pray.

[35 : 55] Uphold us, we ask. Help us to look to Jesus and to claim him and confess him as the author and the finisher of our faith. Do us good then, we pray, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake.

Amen. We're going to bring our service to our conclusion this morning. We're going to sing to God's praise in Psalm 2.

Psalm 2 in the Scottish Psalter, page 201 of the Blue Psalm Book. Psalm 2, we're singing from verse 7 down to the end of the Psalm.

Psalm 2 Psalm 2 is a, I think it's one of, I think it is the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament which should surely show us that it's all about Jesus.

It's a Psalm that emphasizes that Jesus is King. Not only King, he's also God's Son and that's because God has decreed all this.

[37 : 01] It says there, verse 7, the sure decree I will declare. The Lord hath said to me, thou art mine only Son, this day I have begotten thee. Ask of me and for heritage the heathen I'll make thine and for possession I to thee will give earth's utmost line.

But then it says in verse 12, and it's a great verse, it calls us to submit our lives, to surrender our life to Jesus. Kiss ye the Son lest in his ire you perish from the way if once his wrath begin to burn blessed all that on him stay.

So Psalm 2, verse 7, down to the end of the psalm, to God's praise. verse 7, O assure deeply I will declare the Lord hath said to me, the world I have begotten thee.

ask of me and for heritage the heathen I may guide and for possession I to thee will give us and for time thou shalt us with and down.

Hero out of and weak and oh part or hilt the Let us pray.

[39 : 59] Set the Lord in the earth, see that He joins them with your heart.

Is ye the sunless in His heart? Ye perish from the wind.

If all says, what He came to burn, lest all that hold Him stay.

Amen. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore.

Amen.