12/27/15 A Different Birth Story

Introduction

* Finishing our Series on "A Different Kind of Christmas"
  + 1st week= Dare to be Different= John the Baptist= We are called to be different, specifically praying, talking, interacting with people we normally wouldn't
  + 2nd week= Different Kind of King= Jesus wasn't necessarily want the Israelites were looking for= He was a peaceful king of hope and we have his peace and the hope of the ressurection
  + Last week= A Different Song= Mary's song in Luke Ch. 1= Our song this Christmas:
    - Prayer that asks nothing and comes from the heart
    - Done great things for us, Mercy= not getting what we deserve, Fear=Healthy, Awe
    - Welcome strangers, clothe the naked, visit the sick and in prison, Feed the hungry
    - Attitude of Gratitude, Remember, Remember, Remember
* Today we are really going out there with our Sermon "A Different Birth Story", I know y'all already think I'm crazy but you are really going to think I'm crazy today
  + I even think I'm crazy
  + Ever had an argument/discussion with God, I like to think of it more like a persuasive essay
  + Trying to persuade God?
    - Goes something like this
    - God lays something on your heart= Call someone, Pray someone, Tithe, etc., Me this week this sermon
    - You say= IDK God, that's hard; God says= I know- Scripture like, "with God all things are possible" and remember we won't shy away from the hard subjects at Ebenezer
    - You say= God I don't know if I'm ready for that; God says= Matt. 28:20b And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
    - You say= God I don't know if "They are" ready for that; God says= I wouldn't have laid it on your heart if they couldn't
    - Finally you say= OK God, I'll do it but don't blame me if it doesn't work; God says= it will work!
    - That is my disclaimer this am
* We are going to be looking at a birth story in the Bible that you may never have heard about and if/when you read it you probably didn't have Christmas/Jesus' birth on your mind
* We think of Luke 2, read it on Christmas Eve, Linus in the Charlie Brown Christmas Story, Bethlehem-Mary and Joseph-no room in inn- baby wrapped in swaddling clothes in a manger-shepherds and angels

Revelation 12:1-17

1 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. 2 She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. 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. 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,6 and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.7 Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. 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. 11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. 12 Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!” 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. 14 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. 15 The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. 16 But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. 17 Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.

* I told you, the only thing you can think right now is, "Brent is crazy"
* Humor me for a minute and think of this passage in light of Jesus' birth story
* Now we know that John is seeing a vision in Revelation and the Lord is allowing him to see, past, present and future all at the same time
* John's vision in revelation has him caught up to heaven while remaining on earth and seeing things that are occurring in both places at three different periods of time all at the same time (past, present, future)
* We know that God's capacity far surpasses ours and he is able to comprehend far beyond what our little brains can handle, and he is allowing John to experience a piece of that in Revelation.
* Here we have Revelation 12

1. Verses 1 and 2
   * 1 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. 2 She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth.
   * Lot of symbolism going on here
     + Don't have time to cover it all
     + Joseph had a similar vision in Gen. 37
     + Sun, Moon, Crown, Twelve stars= all symbols
   * Focus
     + Woman, pregnant, crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth
     + Mary
       - Young girl= around 14 yrs.
       - Giving birth
       - How many women in here given birth?
       - Sympathize with Mary
       - Part of the story left out in Luke
       - A lot that went on between "the time came for her to give birth.  And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger"
       - Description of the in between
     + Not making light of the the birth process
       - Mary was in agony
       - Birth is painful, no epidural
       - Agony=Mary=Jesus=Birth=Life=Death
   * So we have this image of Mary giving birth to Jesus here on this earth
2. Verses 3-6
   * 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. 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. 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,6 and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.
   * Again a lot of symbolism
     + Red dragon= Satan The Accuser
     + 1/3 of the stars= Fallen angels
     + Dragon trying to devour the child
     + Woman= Church
     + 1260 days= period of time
   * Focus
     + Christmas story as it relates to Jesus
     + Again John is seeing things in heaven and on earth at the same time happening over the past, present and future
     + John sees Satan in heaven and him taking a third of the angels in heaven with him to the earth
     + John sees Satan ready to devour the Child
       - Notice it says child
       - Remember the story of the Wise men
       - Visited with king Herod
       - Herod told them= "when you find him send word back so that I may come and worship him"
       - Really was going to kill him
       - In fact made a decree to kill all the male children under 2 yrs. old
       - Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt until Herod died "the woman fled into the wilderness"
     + Relates to the Christmas story
     + Dragon/Satan ready to devour the child, caught up to God and his throne  and the woman fled
3. Verses 7-10
   * 7 Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. 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.
   * John's vision goes back to heaven
     + He sees the archangel Micheal  
       Micheal defeats Satan, deceiver of the whole world
       - The movie Micheal with John Travolta, borderline sac religious
       - "Battle"
       - Warrior
       - Discussion with one of my former football players this past week- Satan filling his head with lies
       - Deceiver= tries to make us believe things that aren't true, about others/ our situation/ **OURSELVES**
       - Not True
   * Don't lose me people, John hears next is very important verse 10, I tried to tell the Lord that this would be hard but would he listen . . . . . . .No (JK)
     + “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.
       - Salvation= From our enemies, From Satan and his lies
       - Power= Over death/Sin and Fear
       - Through Christ
4. Verses 11-17
   * 11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. 12 Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!” 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. 14 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. 15 The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. 16 But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. 17 Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.
   * Conquered by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony
     + Blood of Jesus
       - Salvation, Power
       - Died for us so that we can have victory over Sin and Death
       - Everlasting life
     + Word of our Testimony
       - Very important
       - What Jesus has done for us
     + Loved not their lives
       - Jesus said= John 12:25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.
   * Lot more imagery and symbolism
     + Dragon pursues the woman= Church
     + Allowed to escape for a time
   * Focus
     + We are in a battle, v. 17
     + Satan tries to accuse followers of Christ, uses a lot of weapons
     + We overcome= By the Blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony

Closing

* It's great to celebrate the Birth of Jesus
  + As a baby in a manger
  + As a peaceful story
* But now as Paul Harvey used to say "You have the rest of the story"
* The birth of Jesus was only the beginning
* Without the beginning we wouldn't have the ending
* Involved in a battle
* We will overcome: By the blood of the Lamb and word of our testimony
* Christ died for us so that we would have everlasting life
* Our testimony is that Christ saved us and he continues to save us each day, that is the REST of the story!