

Battleground: Nativity

The War on Christmas and the Full Armor of God

SERMON STUDY GUIDE | PART 5: THE DRAGON | 12.10.17 | FOLLOW ON FB @PASTORERICHUFFMAN TWITTER @ERICTHESTORY

YOUR MISSION

1. To forget everything you thought you knew about the Christmas story - all the sappy, sentimental fluff - and to revisit the biblical Christmas narrative with a fresh perspective.
2. To deepen your understanding of spiritual warfare by familiarizing yourself with the Enemy's tactics against you and taking stock of the spiritual weapons God has put at your disposal.
3. To better prepare you for the spiritual battles you're facing.

LINE IN THE SAND

Every day, we're inundated with reasons to be cynical; reports of corruption in Washington, hypocrisy in the Church, and misogyny in Hollywood have led many of us to wonder if there's *anything* worth believing in anymore. We *expect* bad news; we know institutions like government, religion, and entertainment will let us down. There are two ways of seeing this reality: as a materialist, or as a mystic.

1. **Materialism:** the belief that existence is explainable solely in material terms, with no accounting of spirit or consciousness. The materialist is not surprised by a world gone mad, because all we are is stuff, fighting for survival. People don't make our own moral choices between good and evil, because there is no "good" and there is no "evil." Our "choices" are predetermined by neurons firing in our brains.
2. **Mysticism:** the belief that existence is both material *and* spiritual. Mystics are heartbroken by headlines about war, persecution, poverty, etc., because they *know* the world can and should be a better place if we work and pray for God's will to be done on earth as in heaven. The material world matters greatly, but mystics know there's more going on than just stuff surviving and reacting.

Do you agree with my assertion that there are more materialists in the world - and even in the Church - than one might expect? On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being "We are living in a material world, and I am a material girl (or guy)" and 10 being "I'm a spirit-animal trapped inside this worthless body", where do you land on the materialism vs. mysticism spectrum?

How does your real life - from your calendar and budget to your conversations and browser history - reflect your worldview as a materialist or a mystic?

WAR OF ATTRITION

Although most people seem to *know* there must be something more than just *matter*, it would appear that we're becoming more materialistic all the time. Would you agree? Why or why not? And if we are becoming more materialistic, what do you think causes that?

Have you ever felt *worn down* by all the *bad news* in the world? What effect does cynicism have on your *soul*?

KEY TEXT: REVELATION 12:1-9

A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads. Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that it might devour her child the moment he was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who “will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.” And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. The woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.

Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

AMBUSH

Who does the woman in this vision represent? What was her connection with the author, John?

Who does the dragon represent? And how about the one-third of stars swept out of the sky?

EYE IN THE SKY

In verse five, the author alludes to Jesus’ birth *and* his ascension to heaven, events separated by over 30 years, as though they happened simultaneously. What might this say about heaven’s perspective when it comes to life on Earth?

How would it change the way you live, including the way you celebrate Christmas, if you saw events on Earth from heaven’s perspective?

DON'T LOSE YOUR HEAD

The choice between materialism and mysticism begins in the mind as we decide what we believe and why. That’s why the New Testament puts such a premium on getting your mind right. What do you think is the connection between your thoughts or beliefs and your salvation?

KEY TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:10-15

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

How are you already acknowledging the invisible, spiritual realities of life? And/or how do you think you might be avoiding or ignoring those realities?

If God is Spirit (John 4:24), and we are made in His image, we are spirits, too. How do you intend to live more spiritually this week? What’s your plan to become more of a mystical warrior?