



December 2020

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

*“A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and 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**” (Revelation 12:1-4, my emphasis).*

Chances are you will not see or receive a Christmas card depicting the nativity in Bethlehem featuring a red dragon in the midst of the cows and lambs, waiting to devour Jesus. A dragon waiting to eat the new born Jesus! This is a story we don't hear much about at Christmas.

The dragon is known by many biblical names and descriptions including a serpent, the god of this world and of course Satan. Jesus described him as *“a murderer from the beginning...a liar and the father of lies”* (John 8:44). In this 12th chapter of Revelation, Satan is portrayed as a deceiver, a master manipulator who leads *“the whole world astray”* (verse 9). He is also characterized as *“the accuser...”* (verse 10).

- *The dragon accuses while Jesus vindicates.*
- *The dragon blames and condemns while Jesus forgives and absolves.*
- *The dragon is all about incrimination and denunciation. Jesus is all about absolution and exoneration.*
- *The dragon ensnares while Jesus delivers.*
- *The dragon enslaves while Jesus liberates.*

Christmas is the time when God in the person of Jesus invaded our world and the gates of hell shook, the demons trembled and the great dragon spewed flames of brimstone and fire, declaring war on God. **Jesus was not welcome in our world then, nor, for that matter, is he welcome in most of our world today.**

War and Peace

The Prince of Peace was about to be born. Peace threatened to break out in that little village of Bethlehem in Roman-occupied Palestine. But the dragon is the very antithesis of peace—the dragon is all about war and bloodshed and slavery. The dragon is the god of war—Jesus, the child born to Mary, is the Prince of peace.

Herod the dragon-king schemed to eliminate Jesus by killing all the “boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and younger” (Matthew 2:16). An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and warned him of this upcoming massacre (now often called “the slaughter of the innocents”) so Mary, Joseph and Jesus became refugees in Egypt, returning to the land of Israel after Herod died (2:19).

The dragon's plans to use Herod to kill Jesus were thwarted, but the dragon did not give up. Preparing to begin his formal ministry Jesus withdrew to the wilderness and fasted forty days and nights (Matthew 4:1). After his fast was completed the dragon decided to tempt Jesus in his weakened physical state of extreme hunger—but again, the dragon was defeated.

After Jesus' ministry started the dragon continually incited and deceived the powerful religious authorities to oppose Jesus at every turn and eventually scheme and plan his death. The dragon and demons and all whom they deceived finally believed they had succeeded when Jesus died on the cross.

Joy to the World

But the devil/dragon and his demons, themselves liars and deceivers, trying to destroy the Light and Life of Jesus were once again vanquished. Their evil ecstasy, an exhilaration they experienced because they thought they had killed God in the flesh, lasted only as long as the body of Jesus was in his tomb.

Joy to the world! Good news! *The dragon has been defeated*, Jesus is alive and risen, and his victory over the devil, death and the grave sets you and me free from guilt, shame, deception and lies. **Our world today is not that much different than the world of first-century Bethlehem into which Jesus was born.** The planet we are trapped on is enveloped by the dragon's darkness, despair and depression. Our world is overwhelmed with oppression, addiction and slavery of all kinds. Disease is unchecked. A pandemic rages. Hatred runs rampant. Misery abounds. Fear produced by the devil (dragon) is at war with the peace of God.

Joy to the world! Good news! Christmas is the promise of the coming once and for all victory over heartache and suffering when God will wipe away all tears. Christmas is thanksgiving for the Gift of Jesus. Our joy at Christmas is not measured or diminished by feelings of loneliness and being unloved—our joy at Christmas is not calculated or evaluated by how many presents we give and get or how many Christmas cards we send or receive—if any at all.

- The joy of Christmas isn't determined by family and friends who may or may not visit you.
- The meaning of Christmas is not encapsulated by ornaments, decorations and festive meals.
- Christmas is all about Jesus, who has conquered the devil, death and the grave, and as our risen Lord, shared his victory with us.
- Christmas is all about the wondrous and majestic love of God, coming into our world in the person of Jesus, so that we might be "*...more than conquerors through him who loved us*" (Romans 8:37).

"In Your light We See Light" (Psalm 36:9)

Christmas is the Light of Jesus that shines in dark places of warfare, animosity and hatred. No matter how dark your life might be, no matter how much suffering, pain and grief—there is hope.

Christmas is not just a nice story to tell children. It's not a comfortable fairy tale to make us feel better and help us sleep at night. Christmas is the reality that the kingdom of God has come to this earth, and since its coming in the person of Jesus it has never left!

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:1-5).

The Light (Jesus) Brings Life—Darkness (the Dragon) Produces Death

As John says, *“In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind”* (John 1:4). Jesus proclaimed *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life”* (John 8:12).

Light is Jesus and all he gives and produces in the lives of those in whom he lives as their risen Lord. Jesus is THE LIGHT OF LIFE (John 8:12). The nature of darkness, on the other hand, is the obvious absence of light.

Darkness is not defined by what it is but by what it is not. Darkness is not what it produces but what it prevents. Darkness is the Dragon and all of his works evident in the lives of those he enslaves, deceives, condemns and abuses.

My dear friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, let us all unite to proclaim the good news that Jesus is who we need, what we need and all we need. Paul reminds us to give *“joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins”* (Colossians 1:12-13).

My dear friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, Jesus is alive. Jesus is risen. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is our Light. He has delivered and rescued us from the Dragon of Darkness and all his depraved evil and unspeakable cruelty. **Joy to the World! Good News! Merry Christmas!**

Your brother in Christ,



Greg Albrecht

President, Plain Truth Ministries

P.S. Here is but one of the many messages of thanks for the service we are able, together, to provide for people all over this world:

I can't tell you how much I rely on your ministry. I can't tell you how many times I have turned to your sermons, letters, articles, books and resources on the PTM website to help me through dark and lonely times. You have no idea how much this ministry means to me. I thank you and all the PTM staff. I thank all of those around the world who pray for and financially support this ministry, because I know that there are so many others like me who desperately need this Christ-centered ministry. Thank you so much!—Canada

CWR/PTM Prayer List—December 2020

These requests for prayer represent just a few of the thousands we receive and pray for. We invite you to join us in praying for these and the others (including all those impacted by COVID-19) that space does not permit us to include here. Thanks for joining with us as a CWR/PTM Prayer Partner.

Please pray for the healing of my arthritis which is severe in my knees, hips and back.—Florida

I need prayers for comfort and peace of mind. My husband suddenly passed away. We had been married for 31 years.—Texas

Please pray for my health to improve and that I will be able to keep my job.—Arkansas

Pray for a cure for the pandemic that is infecting this world, and pray for all the families who lost loved ones to the virus.—South Carolina

Please continue to pray for my wife who is in remission from lung cancer. Please pray for the world as this pandemic is having such a devastating affect on so many people including many, many deaths. And please also pray for the entire medical profession and all health-care workers who are treating people with this sickness.—New York

My brother lost his father-in-law to the Corona Virus and our mother passed quietly in her sleep just a week later, after suffering with dementia for seven years. Please keep our family in your prayers.—Pennsylvania

Please pray for my eyes, as I'm on the way to becoming blind.—Texas

Please pray for God's healing of my wife's chronic cough, for my older brother who is suffering from headaches and fatigue from diabetes and for my sister who is suffering with pain in her back and legs from a car accident.—Florida

Please pray for relief from the pain I have in both shoulders, back and left arm.—Massachusetts

Please pray for my 13-year-old great nephew. He has been sexually and mentally abused by his father.—Arkansas

Pray for relief of the arthritis in my hand and elbow.—Louisiana

Please pray for healing of my feet, which burn all the time, and for my left knee which needs surgery.—West Virginia

Please pray for my uncle, as he will soon undergo radiation treatment for his cancer.—Florida

Please pray for my husband, who recently had a double-lung transplant. He made it through the surgery fine but has now developed an infection as his body is rejecting the new lungs.—Texas

I struggle with health issues and so I ask for God's intervention and to give me the strength to overcome my poor habits. Thank you for your prayers on my behalf.—Kentucky

Please pray for my granddaughter to get her priorities where they need to be and to have faith in God. And please pray that she will stay off drugs even though she may be tempted to return.—Tennessee

Thank you so much for your letters of encouragement. I need God's help—I'm 80 years old and live alone. Please keep me in your prayers.—Louisiana

Please pray for me as I'm having hip problems and have other health issues at my age of 92.—Kentucky

Please pray for my wife who had her left knee replaced and has been in a lot of pain these past few months.—Texas

Our Father in Heaven: We thank you for your grace, mercy and love. You love each of these individuals, and we thank you in advance for the answers you will provide for each request. With thanksgiving for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, our suffering servant who heals us, in whose name we pray—Amen.