Jesus Christ is the Lord of heaven and earth who will make all things new.
GOD USED JOHN’S CONFINEMENT TO SHOW HIM—AND US—THE TRUE STORY OF WHAT GOD HAS DONE, IS DOING, AND WILL DO TO BRING HIS CREATION TO ITS FULL PURPOSE.

OUR CULTURE IS FASCINATED WITH THE TELLING AND ACTING OUT OF STORIES. WE’VE BEEN LISTENING TO AND WATCHING THEM IN THE FORM OF MOVIES AND PLAYS FOR YEARS.

The grandest structure that archaeologists unearthed in the ruins of ancient Ephesus was an outdoor theater capable of seating 25,000 patrons. We don’t know if the apostle John ever attended the great theater while he lived in Ephesus in the first century A.D. But we can safely assume that he knew about it. He also knew that the Roman emperor Domitian (A.D. 81-96) often exploited the mythical tales of Greco-Roman gods to promote his own claim of divinity. These tales may well have been dramatized on the stage at Ephesus.

For John and other believers, however, the cultural pressure to worship the emperor was a non-starter. Christians worshiped the one true and living God. They confessed only one Lord, Jesus Christ. Consequently, the officials of the emperor cult often targeted believers for persecution. In fact, that’s probably the reason John was confined to the island of Patmos. Yet God used John’s confinement to show him—and us—the true story of what God has done, is doing, and will do to bring His creation to its full purpose. Revelation 12 portrays that story in a dramatic fashion.
**REVELATION 12:1-17**

1 A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of 12 stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in labor and agony as she was about to give birth. 2 Then another sign appeared in heaven: There was a great fiery red dragon having seven heads and 10 horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. 4 His tail swept away a third of the stars in heaven and hurled them to the earth. And the dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she did give birth he might devour her child. 5 But she gave birth to a Son—a male who is going to shepherd all nations with an iron scepter—and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. 6 The woman fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared by God, to be fed there for 1,260 days. 7 Then war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels also fought, but he could not prevail, and there was no place for them in heaven any longer. 9 So the great dragon was thrown out—the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the one who deceives the whole world. He was thrown to earth, and his angels with him. 10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: The salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Messiah have now come, because the accuser of our brothers has been thrown out: the one who accuses them before our God day and night. 11 They conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not love their lives in the face of death. 12 Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the earth and the sea, for the Devil has come down to you with great fury, because he knows he has a short time. 13 When the dragon saw that he had been thrown to earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. 14 The woman was given two wings of a great eagle, so that she could fly from the serpent’s presence to her place in the wilderness, where she was fed for a time, times, and half a time. 15 From his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river flowing after the woman, to sweep her away in a torrent. 16 But the earth helped the woman. The earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the river that the dragon had spewed from his mouth 17 So the dragon was furious with the woman and left to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God’s commands and have the testimony about Jesus.

If you watched Revelation 12 as a “movie,” who would be the main players? How many scenes appear, and what main actions occur in each scene? When does tension build? What other emotions arise? How would you describe the way the “movie” ends?
UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

REVELATION 10:1–20:15

To say that Revelation 10–20 covers a lot of territory is a huge understatement! Among the scenes and events in these chapters of Revelation, John saw a mighty angel and a small scroll (10); the martyrdom and resurrection of two “witnesses” (11); the dramatic conflict between a red dragon and a male Child, His mother, and her other offspring (12); the rising of two beasts, one from the sea and the second from the earth (13); the Lamb with His redeemed and sealed people as a great harvest takes place on earth (14); a third round of judgments, poured out of bowls (15–16); the judgment against the “great prostitute” and the beast (17-18); a celebration in heaven and the marriage of the Lamb, as the Rider on a white horse conquers the beast (19); and the binding, releasing, and final crushing of Satan, followed by the great white throne judgment (20).

In this panorama of end-time events, chapter 12 may be seen as a pivotal chapter, a microcosm of the entire story of creation, salvation, and restoration from heaven’s viewpoint. The things John saw and recorded in Revelation 12 have no parallel outside of Scripture.
SATAN DEFEATED (Revelation 12:1-9)

1 A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of 12 stars on her head. 2 She was pregnant and cried out in labor and agony as she was about to give birth.

The first sign John saw was a pregnant woman in the throes of labor pains. The woman’s celestial clothing and the crown of 12 stars are clues to her identity, yet Bible students differ in their conclusions. One view is that the woman represents Israel (see Genesis 37:9, where the sons of Jacob, or Israel, are depicted as “stars”). The woman’s pregnancy points to Israel as the people through whom the Messiah came into the world. A second view suggests that the woman represents not just ethnic Israel but “ideal” Israel, all the redeemed people of God under the Old and New Testaments.

3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: There was a great fiery red dragon having seven heads and 10 horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. 4 His tail swept away a third of the stars in heaven and hurled them to the earth. And the dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she did give birth he might devour her child.

John then saw another sign, a great fiery red dragon. His red color suggested a bloody, murderous nature. The seven heads spoke of wisdom, the 10 horns of power (see Daniel 7:23-25), and the seven diadems of authority. All of these attributes were darkly stained by the dragon’s killer nature.

John described the dragon as having swept away a third of the stars in heaven. Some Bible scholars connect this scene to the rebellion of Satan and other angels in heaven and their subsequent banishment from there (see Luke 10:18; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). Other interpreters take the description as a general reference to Satan’s violent nature and the wanton destruction he seeks to unleash on every good thing God has made or done. In verse 4b, John described a repulsive scene in which the dragon positioned himself at the birthstool, ready to devour the woman’s newborn Child. It’s not difficult to see in this description an allusion to Herod’s murderous decree when Jesus was born (see Matthew 2:16-18).

5 But she gave birth to a Son—a male who is going to shepherd all nations with an iron scepter—and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. 6 The woman fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared by God, to be fed there for 1,260 days.
The male Child born to the woman clearly refers to Jesus Christ. John described Him as the One who will shepherd all nations with an iron scepter. This is a picture drawn from Psalm 2, a messianic psalm extolling the rule of God’s Son, the Messiah (see Psalm 2:9). The dragon’s evil scheme to destroy Jesus was thwarted as all that happened to Jesus in His incarnation, life, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension was by the will and power of God, not by the schemes of Satan. Verse 6 is a vivid picture of God’s providential protection of His people.

7 Then war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels also fought, but he could not prevail, and there was no place for them in heaven any longer. 8 So the great dragon was thrown out—the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the one who deceives the whole world. He was thrown to earth, and his angels with him.

John saw war break out in heaven. Michael is the only “archangel” (ruling angel) mentioned in Scripture (see Jude 9; compare Daniel 10:13; 12:1). John saw Michael lead an army of God’s angels against the dragon and the dragon’s angels. Because scenes in apocalyptic writings do not always appear in a linear fashion, it is hard to know with certainty when this war takes place. Some interpreters see it as occurring in the end times. Others see it as a “flashback” to the angelic rebellion in which Satan was cast down to the earth. Still others see the scene as a general reference to the ongoing cosmic conflict between God’s servants and the enemies of God. In all the views, the point is clear. Satan is no match for God.

John made clear in this scene the identity of the dragon. He named him. The Greek term for Devil means “slanderer.” The Hebrew term for Satan literally means “accuser.” These names well describe Satan’s desire to deceive and destroy the whole world. Thankfully, because of Jesus Christ, the accuser is a defeated foe.

How do these scenes help you understand the nature of spiritual warfare as compared with how Paul described it in Ephesians 6:11-12?
THE LAMB PRAISED (Revelation 12:10-12)

10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: The salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Messiah have now come, because the accuser of our brothers has been thrown out: the one who accuses them before our God day and night. 11 They conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not love their lives in the face of death.

John focused on the loud, clear message, not on the announcer. The proclamation declared vocally the same reality that John saw in 12:7-9. From heaven’s viewpoint, the war has been decided. It’s over. Satan and his evil minions are defeated and doomed. The one who unceasingly accuses God’s people before the Lord has been conquered.

That victory came through God’s salvation … power … and kingdom in the saving work of His Messiah. Because Jesus died on the cross and rose again, Satan can no longer accuse God’s people (see Romans 8:32-33). Moreover, as Revelation 12:11 declares, the redeemed share in the reality and power of Christ’s victory by their faith in Jesus. They conquer Satan by the blood of the Lamb. They defeat the Devil’s schemes by the word of their testimony. Even in the face of martyrdom, believers taste the sweet victory of Christ (see Revelation 2:10).

12 Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the earth and the sea, for the Devil has come down to you with great fury, because he knows he has a short time.

In this verse, John saw that Christ’s victory prompted rejoicing in heaven. Yet it signified a short time of increased woe on the earth. As though he were watching the “replay” of a fiercely fought contest, the final result was already known, although the struggle would continue to play out until the final horn.

In what ways does knowing about Satan’s ultimate defeat give you confidence each day in living for Christ?
THE DRAGON REGROUPS

(Revelation 12:13-17)

13 When the dragon saw that he had been thrown to earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. 14 The woman was given two wings of a great eagle, so that she could fly from the serpent’s presence to her place in the wilderness, where she was fed for a time, times, and half a time.

When the dragon, who is Satan, could not destroy Jesus or foil the Savior’s mission of salvation, he turned his rage on the woman. John saw also that in the providence of God, the woman found a refuge from the dragon in the wilderness.

15 From his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river flowing after the woman, to sweep her away in a torrent.
16 But the earth helped the woman. The earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the river that the dragon had spewed from his mouth.

John switched in 12:15 to the description of Satan as the serpent, reminiscent of the tempter in the garden of Eden (see Genesis 3:1-5; Revelation 12:9). The torrent of water rushing like a river from the serpent’s mouth could be a general reference to satanic opposition to God’s people throughout history, and especially before the end.

17 So the dragon was furious with the woman and left to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God’s commands and have the testimony about Jesus.

This verse offers a sober warning to every generation of Christ’s followers, including believers today. Satan has declared war on us, because we belong to Christ. We must resist the Devil (see James 4:7). Christ defeated him.

List things we must remember about God when our testimony of Jesus is met with hostility.
Satan is a defeated foe and can be overcome through faith in Jesus. Jesus’ death and resurrection give hope to all who trust in Him. Jesus can be trusted even when facing persecution.

_List situations in which you need to see Jesus as victorious and Satan as defeated. What actions can you take as a young adult to live in light of Jesus’ victory?

_Define how this passage gives hope to believers facing difficult challenges in their faith. Make a list of individuals you could share this passage._

_In what ways can your Bible study group support the church worldwide in places where believers are suffering for their testimony about Jesus?_

_MEMORIZE_

_They conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not love their lives in the face of death. — Revelation 12:11_
Use the space provided to make observations and record prayer requests during the group experience for this session.

MY THOUGHTS
Record insights gained and questions to discuss during the group experience.

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MY PRAYERS
List specific prayer needs and answers to remember this week.

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MY MISSION
Acknowledge ways you will obey God’s Word this week.

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