

## Spiritual Warfare I: The War is Real

Isaiah 14:12-14

Revelation 12:1-18

Have you ever had the experience of making plans to attend a new Bible study, but all kinds of distractions seemed to pop up that prevented you from going? Or maybe you made a resolution to attend church more...or read the Bible every day...all because you wanted to grow closer to your Savior. But, again, distractions and excuses cropped up so as to prevent you from doing those things. Or maybe you have been involved with a church that was doing great things for the Kingdom – trying to reach people, grow, or engage in a building project. And where there had previously been harmony among God's people, there arose discord.

What you see is not all there is. There is a larger story. The Kingdom of God is at war with the Kingdom of the World. This Sunday and next we are going to talk about the real issue of spiritual warfare.

Probably the best place to start is at the beginning. How did this war get started?

The beginning... Who was Satan? His original name was Lucifer – the angel of light. He was an angel placed in the Garden of Eden as a guardian.

Ezekiel 28:14-15

*You were anointed as a guardian cherub,  
for so I ordained you.*

*You were on the holy mount of God;  
you walked among the fiery stones.*

*You were blameless in your ways  
from the day you were created  
till wickedness was found in you.*

Then Lucifer rebels against God. Isaiah 14:13-14:

*You said in your heart,*

*"I will ascend to heaven;*

*I will raise my throne  
above the stars of God;*

*I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly,  
on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. <sup>[a]</sup>*

*I will ascend above the tops of the clouds;  
I will make myself like the Most High."*

Lucifer, who began as the angel of light, became Satan. (Satan = Adversary) He not only begins war against God, but against all of God's creation – especially man.

He is an experienced warrior. Satan has 1000's of years experience warring against you. So it is important for us, as Christians, to understand our adversary.

First, you have to realize that the war is real...that there truly is a Satan...and that he comes after you and your family. There are some in the world – even in the church – who do not believe in Satan or in hell. However, Satan is a biblical reality. Not believing in something does not mean that thing does not exist. It simply means Satan can affect you more, because you are not watching for him.

He is the Lord of this world, according to the scriptures – at least until he is ultimately defeated by Christ upon his return.

So, you and I cannot trust in the world. Trusting in the world is trusting in the enemy.

**James 4:4**

*Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God?*

**Ephesians 6:12**

*For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.*

**John 10:10**

*The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.*

**Spiritual battle plain** – we are living on the edges of the plain of Armageddon. The final battle has not happened yet. We are in the skirmishes before the main event. When in the Israel we went to the Valley of Armageddon. It is a wide plain between the mountains. When I looked out there I saw in my mind's eye many battles going on around the edges of the plain. Those are where you and I are today – in the skirmishes before the great war that will happen in the middle of that great field later.

**God v Satan is not apart from you**...you are not a spectator...you are a participant... Just think of those in the Bible whom the demons possessed. Satan was at work then...and he hasn't let up yet. So how does he work?

There are many devices that Satan uses to attack people.

**He mimics Christians** – (Matthew 13:24-30, The wheat and tares) He uses people who are not truly people who have been transformed by the influence of Christ in their life. These people are Christian-looking on the outside, but once you get to know them they turn out to be the ones in the church who gossip, who spread lies, who try to create hostility and disharmony.

This method of infiltration affects both Christians and non-Christians alike. Christians can become cynical about the church and judgmental about the faith of those around them when confronted with a person who seems at first to exemplify Christianity, but then proves to be one who undermines the church and its ministry. Those same false Christians cause non-Christians to steer clear of the church because of perceived hypocrisy. Therefore they don't want to hear about Christ.

**Satan removes the Word from the hearts of those who are new in faith.** (Luke 8:12, Parable of the soils...the seeds that fell on the path and had no time to take root) He does this between the time new Christians hear the Good News and the time they establish a relationship with Jesus. Until a relationship begins, a new Christian's faith is more "knowing *about*" Jesus than "knowing" Him. It's hard for Satan to disrupt a relationship between a believer and God. But it's not so hard to squash budding understanding.

**The Enemy stays in dark places...hiding.** Satan is your adversary. He will deceive you through outright lies and half-truths. These will come at you from sources that you are not readily able to identify as Satan himself. He is a master at using anything other than himself for his purposes...so he can remain in the darkness. His ultimate lie is manifested when he can get you to believe he does not exist. Then he can get you to attribute something *he* has done to God.

**He will send tribulation your way** to see if you will turn against God...or at least become ambivalent towards God. Most of you who have tried to deepen your relationship with Christ have experienced this. Some of you who are getting ready to make the decision to work on your relationship with Christ have experienced it, too. It hits us in different ways.

- Some people experience severe illness or injury to their family. Cancers, car wrecks, financial disaster, loss of job – these can all be ways that Satan is working in your life.
  - He knows those who tend to attribute everything to God and he places these events in their lives. As the person gets angry at God and distances themselves from Him, Satan feels good about a good day's work.
- Satan hates God-honoring marriages and families. Yes, we all make poor decisions sometimes. However, Satan knows when marriages or families are open to temptation or fracture. He knows when you are weak. He will do something like introduce a temptation for one or both spouses to engage in marital infidelity in order to break up the marriage (an institution created by God). He will even give those who succumb to these extramarital affairs valid sounding reasons: "We were growing apart anyway." Other things he will do to stress your marriage are: destroy your finances, create job loss, or bury you in debt.
- The other way Satan gets tries to derail the Kingdom of God is by putting roadblocks in the way when you are trying to advance the Kingdom in your life or in the lives of others. Think back to the examples I gave at the beginning of the message.

Friends, we are not just killing time until Jesus comes back. There is real danger right now. There is a battle that is going on all around you...and you are caught up in it. Keep your eyes open and protect your heart and the hearts of your family.

I tell you all of this so that it's more of a fair fight.

It's only fair for you to know that you are in a real battle every day.

Next week, we are going to talk about what it takes for you to participate successfully in this battle.