

The Invisible War

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- [0 : 00] Good morning. Welcome to the service this morning. As we gather to worship, so to lift up God's name, we've gathered to be encouraged, and we've gathered to encourage others.
- As we've gathered to receive the truth and to be challenged by God's Word. So some of the reasons why we gather as God's family.
- And so all of that together equips us to go forth from here to do a new week serving the Lord.
- Thank you. I've titled the message this morning The Invisible War. The Invisible War.
- As we continue in Revelations, how much awareness do we have of spiritual warfare? Not enough?
- [1 : 24] Do we acknowledge there is spiritual warfare? Yeah. We do. You know, on one hand, sometimes we tend to blame the devil for everything.
- And he is the God of this age, seeking to mislead. Yet we have to acknowledge the depravity of our human nature that without Christ, we struggle.
- And so there is that side. And yet, in the unseen, in the spiritual realm, there is warfare.
- And we very clearly don't have a full picture, as we could not stand that.
- we would not be able to handle that. But the church is reminded to remember that we fight a spiritual warfare as well.
- [2 : 34] And so to start, let's turn to Revelations, not Revelations, but Ephesians chapter 6, just to be reminded of that. Ephesians 6.
- Verse 10 through 13. Ephesians 6, starting in verse 10. And we're encouraged, finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.
- Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age.
- against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, understanding this, take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand.
- So I won't elaborate on the armor itself, but we as God's children need to recognize that we live in spiritual warfare.
- [4 : 04] And there is a battle raging for the souls of men and women and children. And as believers, and we are secure in Christ, Satan attempts to keep us from walking with the Lord or serving Him properly, and yet, there are so many souls out there, there's a battle for that soul.
- When he dies, when she dies, who will claim? Spiritual warfare at its very highest.
- In Revelations, we have a picture of this coming to a head, spiritual warfare. Satan leading the evil forces, going against God and His forces.

Now we know, ultimately, God will win. God has won. And yet, God wants us as His children to participate in winning souls for Him.

Bringing them to the Lord so that He can save them. We're going to, a little bit later, read out of Daniel where warfare even then existed very strongly.

[5 : 48] So, just recapping in Revelations a little bit, we're still actually in chapter 11. I asked him to read chapter 12. But we're going to finish off chapter 11.

So we had, we had just gone through the trumpet judgments, ending with the first and second woe. The first woe being the scorpion-like creatures, demonic, that could hurt mankind for five months so badly that they would wish to die.

And yet, they sought death and couldn't die. these were men that did not have the mark or the seal of God on them. And the scorpions attack.

And so, and then the, and the second woe was the 200 million horsemen, the army coming and, and, and were told to kill one-third of mankind.

mankind. A huge number. One-third of mankind. And in today's number, that would be two and a half billion people.

[7 : 07] Huge. That's, that's, the end of chapter 9. Last, the last message I did, we, we then looked at chapters 10 and part of 11 where Daniel saw another angel and he heard the seven thunders uttering their voices and Daniel wants to record that as well and God tells him or the angel tells him, do not write.

Seal it up. This is not going to get written down. It's not for mankind to, to know. And after that, Daniel was given a little book to eat and he ate it figuratively and it became sweet as honey but bitter in his stomach.

And the message of God is sweet to the believer and bitter to the unbeliever as we face judgment. And then we moved on to chapter 12 and, and we had him measuring the altar showing us there will be a temple in this time and, and then the two witnesses that God has sent on earth who, who prophesied for three and a half years who were given special powers to produce plagues and drought similar to that of what God used Moses and Elijah for and these two fire could come out of their mouth to destroy their enemies and the world came to resist and hate these two men and at the end of three and a half years God gives them over and allows Satan power to kill them.

And that was where we ended with, with these two men laying in the streets of Jerusalem for three days and the world rejoices and throws a party literally exchanging gifts in their joy.

And then as the world watches God resurrects them and takes them back to heaven. That's where we left off in chapter 11.

[9 : 23] We're going to pick that up in verse 15 of chapter 11 and just spend a few moments here finishing off before we hit chapter 12.

So starting in verse 15, Then the seventh angel sounded and there were loud voices in heaven saying, The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ and he shall reign forever and ever.

The seventh trumpet sounds and this is not to be mixed up with the last trumpet in Thessalonians with the rapture but this is in sequence the seventh trumpet signaling this is it.

This is the end. God's program will come to completion and ultimately the Lord will come down to fight his enemies and to set up his kingdom here on earth.

So the seventh trumpet opens the way and he says things have come to the end. And as the seventh trumpet blows before John he sees a worship scene again in heaven similar similar to what we described in chapters 4 and 5 with the throne in the temple and the 24 elders and so verse 16 and the 24 elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshipped God.

[11 : 09] So as the seventh trumpet blows and the announcement is made this is it. God's program is going to come to a close with his last judgments and then there's a worship scene in heaven glorifying God that he is going to see this through and make an end of human satanic government.

and the world as it is today will come to an end and there will never again be human government.

Yeah, I would say praise the Lord. That is that's all that's left for us to say as we worship God. So I think this worship team in heaven recognized and gave God glory for what was happening.

Their words in verse 17 We give you thanks O Lord God Almighty the one who is and who was and who is to come.

Because you have taken your great power and reigned the nations were angry and your wrath has come and the time of the dead that they should be judged.

[12 : 39] There may be a quote or partial quote out of Psalm 2 where we read that the nations rage against the Lord and His anointed and yet we are commanded to kiss the Son.

God will hold them in derision. He will make an end of their mockery. Further their words and that you should reward your servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear your name small and great and should destroy those who destroy the earth.

And so judgment they're acknowledging God will now judge. For the Christian it will be the judgment seat of Christ. For the non-believer it will be the great white throne judgment at the end.

But the sheep and goat for the timing when the Lord comes back on earth. And those that survive the tribulation period will be judged and divided.

Those who the sheep will enter the kingdom and live with Christ and the goats will be cast into the lake of fire. So we have a number of judgments and we're going to talk more about them at the end of this series.

[14 : 00] The judgments of God. But that's the scene that we see that the worship team in heaven acknowledges. The time has come to judge.

And then verse 19. Then the temple of God was opened in heaven and the ark of his covenant was seen in his temple and there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake and great hail.

For John to witness this must have been just so magnificent.

I was going to say out of this world. How do we describe? He saw the temple. By the way, is there a temple in heaven?

Talks about a temple here. And the ark of the covenant was seen. You know, when we read in Hebrews, I believe it's in chapter 8, it talks about what Moses made was a replica of what's in heaven.

[15 : 23] It was a model of the true in heaven. And so, literally, I think we need to understand God's temple, his throne, and the ark of his covenant.

Now, what's significant about the ark of the covenant? What did the ark represent in the Old Testament? Any thoughts? safety?

Somebody better help me out here. The ark, God's glory, God's presence. It represented God is dwelling with Israel.

And so, the word covenant means God's covenant he made with them. They were faithless. God was faithful.

And so, for John to see the ark in heaven, it speaks of God's presence, but also of his faithfulness to bring all these things to pass.

[16 : 42] It would have been symbolic of that, God's faithfulness. And then, like the sixth seal, and as we'll come to the bowl judgments later, not today, but later, the seventh bowl, the finish, we have lightnings, noises, thunderings, earthquakes, and great hail at the very end.

And in the bowl judgments, I think we read of a hundred pound hail pieces. coming down. So they all mention different aspects of God's judgment of his wrath.

And so again, here, we get a description of one aspect of it. And so, can you picture yourself in John's shoes, seeing the throne room, the temple, the ark, of the covenant, covenant, and then the 24 elders falling prostrate before God in worship and singing or saying these verses, and then to see or hear the lightnings, see them, the noises, the thunderings, an earthquake and great hail.

And John wrote what he wrote. this is the picture that we have. The seventh trumpet.

And so, a snapshot of the very end. Let's move on to chapter 12. Now, a great sign appeared in heaven.

[18 : 32] And so, we need to look at this sign. I need to ask, what's an allegory? Okay.

That's, yeah, at least in part. Yeah. An allegory is used for that purpose. Yeah. Anybody add to that? Like a puzzle?

Okay. Okay. I'll read a dictionary one from Oxford.

A story, a picture that uses symbols to convey a hidden or ulterior meaning, typically moral. and what we have in chapter 12 is an allegory.

It's a part of the English language, a figure of speech, so to speak, and God is going to use a figurative story now to bring out a spiritual meaning of spiritual warfare since the beginning.

[19 : 58] And in this allegory, which starts in 12 and ends in chapter 13, we're not going to be able to cover all of that this morning, but we want to start to walk through this.

There are seven figures in this allegory that are introduced. and we want to start to look at who are these seven. The first one is a woman, the second one is the dragon, and then there's the child, and then there's Michael, and the woman's offspring, and then we have the beast of the sea, and lastly the beast of the earth.

all play a part in this story, in this allegory, and we need to understand correctly who are these individuals to get God's word right.

And so we're going to begin with the first figure here, the woman. Now a great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.

Who is the woman? Israel? How do we know? How do we know it's not Mary?

[21 : 37] The Old Testament clarifies this. Absolutely. And as we read further, we'll realize it can't possibly be Mary, the mother of Jesus.

But this is figuratively Israel in mind here as the woman. And many, many teach that this is the church.

The woman represents the church here. and as we go through this, we will realize that too is not possible. And if we get this wrong, and we build our theology on a verse like this, getting it wrong, then we have to spiritualize much scripture to make it work.

And we can't do that. So the woman is Israel, the representative of Israel, clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland, or a crown of twelve stars.

Now, what does that remind us of? The twelve tribes? Twelve disciples?

[22 : 57] Joseph's dreams. Probably, I was going to start there. But, yeah, all of this, but the dream that he had was that the stars, the sun, and the moon bowed down to him.

And, of course, when he told his brothers, they mocked him and hated him. And we can read that in Genesis. And when he told his father, his father even rebuked him, and his father even clarified, and he says, shall I and your mother and your brothers bow down to you?

His dad asked that, but he was troubled, but he was puzzled with that, because Joseph didn't, he was not off his rocker. and I think Jacob realized there's something deeper here.

And so he will maybe also have pondered on those things. And, of course, later in Genesis, as Joseph arises as the ruler in Egypt, what happens?

They bow down. His brothers all bow down, and his father bows down. And his mother, of course, under the feet, she has been buried already.

[24 : 28] And so we have very clearly a picture out of Jacob, the twelve tribes of Israel. And so the woman representing Israel, being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.

So the woman is with child, she's pregnant, so to speak, allegorically, and is about to give birth.

To a child. And then another sign appears in heaven, and we are introduced to the second one. A great fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns and seven diadems on his head.

Who is the dragon? It is Satan the devil.

Absolutely. And in Scripture, Old and New Testament make that quite clear. In Daniel, we receive that description of the heads and the horns.

[25 : 41] Ultimately, looking to the end, the final expression of Satan will be with ten kings, but the seven heads representing seven levels of human government, or seven past governments, with the revived Roman being the last.

And we'll look more at that in chapter 17, I believe, in Revelations. And so, Satan is identified here as the dragon.

And it says, his tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth, and the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth to devour her child as soon it was born.

So, we're going back in history, in this allegory, in this story, and we're getting an overview of spiritual warfare, is what's happening here as God prepared the plan of salvation by calling Abraham and his descendants as my covenant chosen people through whom I will bring forth my son.

Satan resisted. right from the Garden of Eden where he deceived Eve and convinced them to go against God where they fell into sin, the human race.

[27 : 27] And the warfare started when Satan was cast out of heaven. God and here we're told that he took with his tail, figuratively speaking, he drew one-third of the stars.

And the stars is a reference to angels. One-third of the angels in heaven were swept out of heaven by Satan's attraction, convincing, whatever means he used, he convinced one-third of the angels to abandon God, to go against God and they were cast out of heaven.

And today we have demons by the multitudes as they're Satan's followers or co-workers we would say, his employees, all working against God, trying to keep God's plan from coming to fruition, to a foe.

That is their goal. And so even in the Gospels we read of all the demons that Jesus cast out and always they knew him. They recognized Christ.

And they also recognized their place. And they would cry out, don't throw me into the pit or don't cast me or send me to the pit.

[29 : 02] Hellfire. They know their destiny. They know what lies ahead. And so they decided to follow Lucifer, the name he had in heaven, and today we know him as Satan.

This whole teaching is quite heavy as we're talking about spiritual warfare. We're talking about God and Satan being enemies.

What's that? We are caught in between, right? We are the victims as Satan tries to get at God through his people. ultimately.

And if we think of that, you know, if you wanted to avenge someone or revenge, take vengeance at someone, how better could you do it than getting at their children?

How much more deeper could you hurt someone than attacking their children? You know, when we were in Bolivia and we had gone through a very deep spiritual warfare battle in church and in the community where we lived, and that was coming at its very thickest.

[30 : 31] And when we drove into the community, we could literally sense the heaviness, just the gripping satanic warfare happening. and just days before there was breakthrough and victory, our son, who is now 16, was two years old then, and Satan attacked him.

And Satan attacked this little boy. And I cannot describe the feelings that went through me. There was such an anger against Satan, against his...

He stoops down to the lowest levels to fight. In German, we would say, he has no morals.

He will reach to the lowest steps to do what he has to do. And I can so clearly remember the anger I felt against Satan.

But I had to turn it over to God. And in the name of God, he had to leave. But to see that, and many of you will have your own stories of spiritual warfare.

[32 : 02] But in the Lord, there is victory. And there was. God is. But anyway, going back, so as the woman is about to give birth, he is there, Satan is there, to devour the child as soon it was born.

Well, we don't have to look back far in history, it's in our Bibles, that when Jesus was born, the child, what happened?

Satan worked through whom? Herod. Yeah. He used a human leader. And who died?

Who died? The children, the innocent victims. And Satan used Herod to kill I don't know how many of little boys two years and under.

In Bethlehem and all its districts, there was no little boys left. Satan working against God.

[33 : 24] How many mothers were in anguish and fathers and siblings? things. This is spiritual warfare.

Verse 5, she bore a male child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron, and her child was caught up to God and his throne.

So who is the child? Jesus. Jesus. And I don't think we have to figure that out. It's quite clear.

There's only one person that the scripture teaches that will come to rule with a rod of iron. That's Jesus Christ. And that will happen at his second coming as he sets up his kingdom.

He will rule with a rod of iron. And then her child was caught up to God and his throne. Where is the Lord Jesus today? Before the eleven apostles, Jesus ascended in a cloud, or a cloud received him.

[34 : 38] And Stephen saw him where? As he died? Standing by the throne. Our Lord is there.

John, by the way, has seen him in these visions. The Lamb of God by the throne. It's him that took the scroll out of the Father's hand and took the seals off.

So we're quite clear on this thus far. As Israel, the woman, bore a male child, the promised prophet, the Son of God, who was to come.

And so God caught him back up into heaven. Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God that they should feed her there 1,260 days.

That number is repeated so many times. Three and a half years, 42 months. And so the woman, Israel, fled into the wilderness and there God prepared a place for her.

[35 : 58] And he would feed her there or nourish her there for three and a half years. This is picturing the last half of the tribulation period, the great tribulation.

Israel, those that flee and turn to God, will be fed by God and protected. And let's turn to Matthew 24.

Reiterate that. Matthew 24. Matthew 24. Matthew 24. Matthew 24. Matthew 24. Matthew 24. Matthew 24. Matthew 24.

Matthew 24. Matthew 24. Matthew 24. Matthew 24. Matthew 24.

Matthew 24. Matthew 24. Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, whoever reads, let him understand, so the abomination is where the antichrist empowered by Satan will reveal himself as God almighty in the temple.

[37 : 21] And the actual abomination, it may be that he puts up a statue of himself as God to be worshipped. We're not, we can't be bang on what exactly the abomination is.

Others think he'll offer a sacrifice, a pig in the temple. I think more it's going to be he's going to make an image of himself as God and demand to be worshipped.

not. And that's where the Jews will realize they have been deceived. And then when you see that, this is at the midpoint of the tribulation period, verse 16, then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

And let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days.

And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time nor ever shall be.

[38 : 45] The urgency that's presented here to the Jews when you see this happening don't go get your stuff.

Run. For then Satan will be unleashed and God will remove his protection and the saints will be given over to his hand.

So that's how it corresponds well with the account that Jesus gave but now in revelations the woman fled into the wilderness where she has a place prepared for God that they should feed her there 1,260 days.

And then in verse 7 we have a war that broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought with the dragon and the dragon and his angels fought.

But they did not prevail nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. Thank you Johnny. We have a war that breaks out in heaven as God's plan comes to the last phase.

[40 : 20] there's war breaking out afresh with a renewed vigor and it's Michael and his angels under him that fight with Satan and Satan's angels.

And we literally have warfare in heaven, kind of a final battle and then Satan is cast down. We're going to finish reading that in the next message.

But let's turn to Daniel in closing and just read a warfare there. Daniel chapter I was going to say chapter 7 but it's chapter 10.

Daniel chapter 10. So now we're backing up 500 years before Christ. 600 years actually before Christ and Daniel is in Babylon a prophet of God an old man at this point and we'll read a few verses in the beginning here in chapter 10.

In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel whose name was called Belteshazzar. the message was true but the appointed time was long and he understood the message and had understanding of the vision.

[41 : 53] In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant food nor meat nor wine came into my mouth nor did I anoint myself at all till three weeks were fulfilled.

Now on the 24th day of the first month as I was by the side of the great river that is the Tigris river I lifted my eyes and looked and behold a certain man clothed in linen whose waist was girded with gold of Eupaz and a further description of the angel who comes to Daniel.

So Daniel has been seeking the Lord regarding this end times the visions that he has been seeing. He is for three weeks fasting and praying and seeking the Lord to give him understanding and then after three weeks this angel from heaven and a very glorious description of him comes to Daniel and we'll skip down to verse 10 in Daniel 10 and suddenly a hand touched me which made me tremble on my knees and on the palms of my hands and he said to me O Daniel man greatly beloved understand the words that I speak to you and stand upright for I have now been sent to you while he was speaking this word to me I stood trembling then he said to me do not fear

Daniel for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and to humble yourself before your God your words were heard so Daniel from the day you started to pray I heard you your words reached heaven God heard but then further explanation your words were heard and I have come because of your words but the prince of Persia the kingdom of Persia withstood me 21 days who is the prince of Persia Satan the prince of Satan withstood me 21 days and behold who Michael one of the chief princes came to help me for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia but now

I have come to make you understand for 21 days God's angel who was sent to give Daniel an answer was held up in warfare till Michael came to the rescue for three weeks they fought in the heavenlies and three weeks Daniel fasted and prayed God give me an answer Satan does not want God's plan to be fulfilled and yet in the end he loses every time ultimately he has already lost but we see in our everyday life we're not aware of the depth of warfare but here is an example of such magnitude of spiritual warfare that as humans we could not bear it but we're told that here and so future in revelations and in the tribulation period there will be warfare like this maybe even greater fear and there

[46 : 12] Satan has access to God now but he will be denied that and cast down to the earth forever ever and so we're going to end with that and pick up the story the allegory next time in two weeks from now but as we think of these things I would like to challenge us where where is Satan trying to discourage me where is there an area in my life today where he's keeping me from serving God full heartedly in Christ God secures us but Satan can still keep us from serving him fully from being that light to the world around us and it's very very important for us to realize that this warfare is continuing even though we don't see it physically but to look at my life where are those stumbling blocks and why are they there who am

I fighting who is influencing me and may the Lord as we recognize that and turn to God with that may the Lord give us victory as we gain victory it's for his glory for his kingdom as God is calling men and women and children to him and Satan wants to keep that from happening may the Lord give us victory and as we turn to him he will he has promised that let's close father father i thank you that that you in your own discerning way have kept some of this warfare from us and yet you've allowed us to glimpse enough to realize that Satan is out there to deter us to keep us from following you to keep our children from following you to keep us from serving you and so father as we recognize this and as we turn to you as the only one that has power over the enemy we claim that victory in your name to your glory amen