



Spiritual Warfare

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A war is being waged around us as we speak. This struggle has been taking place since the beginning of time and the consequences of this conflict will echo throughout an eternity.

You are a participant in this war. You are not a bystander, although you may desire to be. The decisions you make will help to destroy or save the people around you.

There only two sides in this war. This study of spiritual warfare is intended to aid the living in seeing what all of the dead now know. With God's blessing, may we embark on a biblical consideration of the things taking place 'behind the scenes' that are hinted at throughout the inspired word with the purpose of understanding better the war we are involved in and our place in the battle. May we learn to be stronger warriors for our King in order to stand with Him on the final day when the last enemy is destroyed.



Table of Contents

<i>Lesson 1: Roaming About on the Earth.....</i>	Page 5
<i>Lesson 2: Kingdoms for Sale.....</i>	Page 9
<i>Lesson 3: Disputing with Satan.....</i>	Page 13
<i>Lesson 4: Delayed in Persia.....</i>	Page 17
<i>Lesson 5: The Army of God.....</i>	Page 21
<i>Lesson 6: Times and Boundaries.....</i>	Page 25
<i>Lesson 7: Changing Sides.....</i>	Page 29
<i>Lesson 8: Armor of God.....</i>	Page 33
<i>Lesson 9: War in the Heavens.....</i>	Page 37
<i>Lesson 10: Satan's Pet.....</i>	Page 41
<i>Lesson 11: The Everlasting Kingdom.....</i>	Page 45
<i>Lesson 12: The Final Victory.....</i>	Page 49



This work has been made with the hope that together we can search the scripture and develop a greater understanding of it. Hopefully, it will make your study of this topic more edifying, more profitable, and more enjoyable. It is not intended to take the place of your responsibility to prepare for the studies. Please devote adequate time to the material before our study, so we can all be edified by one another (Hebrews 10:24-25).

All verse references are taken from the New American Standard Bible 1995 unless otherwise noted.

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Roaming About on the Earth

IN PREPARATION

Read Job 1.

When did Satan come before God?

How does the Lord introduce Job to Satan?

With what argument does Satan dismiss the Lord's praise of Job?

What is Satan hoping Job will do?

“The Lord said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’ Then Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.’” (Job 1:7)

The Accuser. The word “Satan” is applied to the evil one because of mission; to accuse. But who is he accusing? Certainly he accuses men of sin before the Lord in order to claim them for his kingdom. Does he not also accuse God? Job 1 reveals to us that his ultimate purpose was to accuse God of wrongdoing rather than simply attacking the man, Job.

Why was Satan roaming?

On a day and place unspecified, the “sons of God” came to present themselves before the Lord. These would have been the angelic hosts and spiritual servants of God. Satan was formerly counted among these beings, in what form we do not know. We do know that he was created by God and would thus have been created upright. From this state, using his freewill, he rebelled and now approaches God with evil intent in mind.

When the Lord asks where Satan is coming from and the answer is given, “from roaming about on the earth,” our minds quickly begin to question Satan’s purpose. Seeing his slander against Job shortly thereafter and his ruthless attacks upon Job and his family over the next verses we can quickly ascertain that Satan’s purpose for roaming the earth is not upright. Satan’s time on earth in this chapter and throughout the Bible is for the spiritual purpose of waging war against God and His people.

Roaming About on the Earth

Satan was seeking to spiritually destroy Adam and Eve's fellowship with God in the Garden of Eden. He succeeded in deceiving the woman to believe a lie. (Genesis 3:1-6) Peter warns Christians that Satan is seeking to accomplish the same goal against them. He writes, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." (1 Peter 5:8) Certainly this "devouring" has reference to a spiritual destruction of God's children. Why, then, was Satan roaming the earth during Job's day? It was certainly for the same purpose; to break people from their spiritual fellowship with God. When he leaves God's presence his target is Job.

What was God's purpose?

A reading of Job 1 and 2 leaves the Bible student with the impression that God was seeking to prove some point to Satan and Job was merely a vessel purposed to accomplish His task. It was not Satan who brought Job into the conversation, but God. It is apparent that the Lord knew Satan's purpose for wandering the earth (as formerly discussed), since He immediately goes on the offensive saying, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." (Job 1:8) Obviously God is proud of Job. But that is not the point, is it? The point is that 'there are some men, beings that I have created, who are righteous and upright. They choose to serve Me.' God was making a point to Satan through the illustration of Job; there are those who will serve Him despite Satan's efforts.

Satan, of course, objects to God's conclusion and to His evidence. He asks, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not made a hedge about him... You have blessed the work of his hands... But put for Your hand... he will surely curse You to your face." (Job 1:10-11) Without a doubt, Satan believes what he is saying. After all, did Satan not also curse God? Surely Job will as well. Satan's point is clear; 'Job only serves You because he is benefited by it physically. Remove the physical blessings and he will not care about his spiritual fellowship with You.' God knows better concerning His servant Job and says, "all that he has is in your power." (Job 1:12) After failing to destroy Job, Satan must increase the efforts by attacking Job's flesh. Again, God says, "Behold, he is in your power..." (Job 2:6) And still,

Roaming About on the Earth

“Job did not sin with his lips.” (Job 2:10) Satan’s argument was overthrown. There are some who will serve the Lord without physical blessings and even without their health. Are you one of those people?

What does Satan hope to accomplish?

We know that Satan seeks to destroy men’s fellowship with God. We know that he was seeking for Job to curse God and (spiritually) die, as Job’s wife suggested. (Job 2:9) But what is Satan’s end game in all of this? These are all merely battles of the spiritual war taking place behind the scenes since the beginning of time. Satan’s ultimate purpose is to overthrow God completely. (Revelation 12:7-9)

Perhaps God is overthrown if He is shown to be unjust. Consider that before Christ came God was a justifier of many. Yet, justification can only be found through Christ’s blood. Satan, not knowing God’s plan through Christ, would have believed himself to have the proof that God is unjust! How can God forgive those who have sinned since their debt had not been paid? Paul tells us, though: “God... gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.” (Romans 4:17) God knew that He was sending His Son and that through Him all debts would be paid. God was proven to be just in forgiving His people.

Perhaps God is overthrown if He is shown to be a liar. After all, Paul says that God cannot lie. (Titus 1:2) Satan apparently does not believe this to be so. He believed God to be lying about Job’s willingness to serve Him. Satan accused God of lying to Adam and Eve as well and told them, “You will not surely die.” Satan may be attempting to show that God is wicked. If so, he is failing.

Perhaps Satan believes that God will be overthrown if all bow to himself rather than to God. Why else would Satan want to accuse Job in this way? Why would he be described as “he who accuses [our brethren] before our God day and night” except that he is seeking to destroy God’s seat of power?

This spiritual war means everything to Satan. Does it matter to you?

Roaming About on the Earth

**What are some other times that the Bible mentions Satan's presence on the earth?
What is he doing?**

What did Satan want Job to do? Do you think he wants us to do the same?

What was God trying to prove to Satan? How was Job an evidence of that?

**What is Satan's ultimate goal? What are some ways he may hope to accomplish his
goal?**

Kingdoms for Sale

IN PREPARATION

Read Matthew 4.

What was Satan asking Jesus to prove?

How does Jesus answer every temptation set before Him?

Who does Satan say has the ability to give Jesus the nations?

What was the cost to receive the nations from Satan?

“Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.’” (Matthew 4:8)

Jesus’ time in the flesh was of great importance to the Father and was essential to the salvation of mankind. (John 3:16) This time was also important to the devil (or “accuser”). Jesus was about thirty years old when He went to be baptized in the Jordan at the hands of John the Baptist. Immediately afterward Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. In light of the spiritual war that Satan had determined to wage against God, we know that this time period was seen by the evil one to be a great opportunity.

Satan’s Great Opportunity

Satan knew that Jesus was coming as the Messiah (“Anointed One”) to fulfill the plan of God. How much understanding he had of the particular mission of Jesus is unknown, but we find Satan seeking to deter Jesus from doing the will of God repeatedly. In the temptations of Matthew 4 Satan was seeking to cause doubt in Jesus saying, “If You are the Son of God,” and also to cause Jesus to abuse His power and favor with God. (Matthew 4:3, 6) Failing in those attempts, Satan then offers Jesus a deal; fall and worship him and receive the kingdoms of the earth.

Did Satan believe Jesus was seeking the physical throne of Israel? If so, perhaps he was trying to offer more than that by giving all of the nations. Or, if Satan understood the spiritual nature of



Kingdoms for Sale

Jesus' rule, was he trying to cause Jesus to doubt His ability to build a kingdom of great size? Jesus knew His kingdom would prosper. (Matthew 13:31-32) It is possible Satan was simply tempting Jesus to doubt His work. Regardless, Satan understood that if Jesus were to betray the Father the spiritual war would be won. God's will would be thwarted which was announced in the Garden of Eden (to bruise the head of Satan- Genesis 3:15) and, since Jesus is also God, Satan would seize authority through being worshiped by God. Although His cunning deceptions were successful towards Adam and Eve, as well as all of us when we have been deceived by the enticements of sin, Jesus was not so foolish.

Offering the Nations

The Bible student must ask, "Can Satan even offer the nations?" Are they within his power to give? The answer may not be as simple as some suggest. In a sense, Satan does have control over the nations. Wicked men are members of Satan's kingdom and for this reason he is called the "god of this world." (2 Corinthians 4:4) As we will study in a future lesson, Satan also has been known to raise up nations for his purpose. In that sense, then, it is reasonable that Satan can claim the kingdoms of the world to be his own. Most of God's people, after all, are lowly and lack nobility in regard to earthly prestige. (1 Corinthians 1:26)

On the other hand, it is ultimately God who causes the rise and fall of nations. Nebuchadnezzar's throne was given by God, not Satan. When the king's arrogance kept him from recognizing that fact his throne was taken away by God. After learning the lesson, Nebuchadnezzar praises God and proclaims to all, "the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes." (Daniel 4:32) Nebuchadnezzar would not believe Satan to be ruler of the nations, despite the evil men that inhabit the high places of human governments.

The Cost of Kingdoms

Even though the lie of Satan seems apparent and he has nothing to offer that God does not allow him to give, Satan set a price on receiving the nations of men to Jesus; worship him.

Kingdoms for Sale



Although offered as an exchange, the rest of Scripture bares out that Satan viewed this as an either/or proposition; either Jesus worships him or Satan kills him. When Jesus refuses to fall at his feet Satan leaves Him, but that does not mean that Satan has given up. Instead, Satan's efforts turn to murdering the Son of God and thus, in his mind at least, stopping God's plan from unfolding.

It was the devil who "put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray [Jesus]." (John 13:2) Satan found the tool he needed in the greedy and foolish heart of Judas. He did not realize that this "victory" would actually be his defeat since victory for us all comes through the spilled blood of Christ. This fatal miscalculation of the spiritual war is leading to Satan's final ruin, but his influence among the nations is still a threat against those who seek to walk with the Lord.

We must see the spiritual war still taking place through the actions of wicked and righteous men alike. Because of this, Paul exhorts the Christians, "I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity." (1 Timothy 2:1-2) Let us continue to pray for peace and quiet in the nations around us so that we may do our work as Christians and wage spiritual war to advance the borders of Christ's kingdom!

Kingdoms for Sale

What was Satan's purpose with Jesus in the wilderness?

Why did Satan offer Jesus the kingdoms of men? Does he have that authority?

**What famous Bible king wrote a letter to the nations expressing that God rules all?
How did he learn that lesson?**

**After Satan failed to tempt Jesus away from the Father, what did he purpose to do?
Why did Satan think this was a good idea?**

Disputing with Satan

IN PREPARATION

Read Jude.

What should the brethren contend for?

What did Michael and the devil argue about?

What were the false teachers in Jude's day reviling?

Who is said to have all dominion and authority? For how long?

“But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’” (Jude 9)

Gnostics were plaguing the churches during the days of Jude. Although short, the book of Jude is a scathing rebuttal of Gnostic heresies-- one of which involves the slander against angelic beings. It is not known exactly what had been said of the spiritual servants, but Jude says they “revile angelic majesties... things which they do not understand.” (Jude 8, 10) To illustrate their folly, Jude tells the brethren that Michael would not even bring a “railing judgment” against the devil, one who deserves it! Rather, Michael says to him, “The Lord rebuke you!” The point is that Gnostics are slandering angelic hosts who are likely innocent and Michael, who is mightier than we, would not even malign Satan! The Gnostics were out of line.

The account of Michael and Satan's dispute over Moses is not found in Scripture but appears in a now lost portion of the Assumption of Moses, a Jewish historical book. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Didymus of Alexandria all attest that the quotation is from the Assumption of Moses-- a book which they were in possession of. We can tell from the fragments which remain that the main theme of the book was the ability of God to accomplish His will regardless of the rejection of man. The final days of Moses are discussed as well as last advice given to Joshua. Besides these things, the conversation Jude references between Michael and Satan once again brings the spiritual war into our minds.



Disputing with Satan

Michael the Archangel

Jude identifies the angel involved in the exchange with Satan as one named Michael. This angel is named in three different settings in the Scripture; Daniel 10, Jude, and Revelation 12. The name “Michael” means “Who is like God?” It is a name depicting honor towards the Creator and submission to Him. Jude identifies him as an “archangel,” or “chief angel.” In other words, some type of authority or rank over others is granted through the description. This understanding is confirmed for us in Revelation 12:7 which says, “And there was war in heaven, *Michael and his angels* waging war with the dragon...” Michael has authority among the angelic host, and this might be the reason that he is the one disputing with Satan in the scene that Jude describes. There will be more discussion about the work of Michael during the next lesson.

The Body of Moses

Why were Michael and the devil even arguing about the body of Moses? It is interesting that we do not know of another time in which Satan was interested in taking possession of a body. What was special about Moses’ body?

Besides being a great leader for the people of Israel and delivering the people to the border of the promised land, Moses had a special relationship with God. “The LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend.” (Exodus 33:11) Moses witnessed God in a way that changed his every appearance.

“It came about when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses’ hand as he was coming down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him. So when Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.” (Exodus 34:29-30)

No explanation is given to explain why Moses’ face shone, but Moses hid his face with a veil except when speaking with God and, afterwards, when delivering God’s message to the people. (Exodus 34:34-35)



Disputing with Satan

Moses' body was given a unique treatment by the Lord when He died. "So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day." (Deuteronomy 34:5-6) We know from Jude's account that, before his body was buried by the Lord, Satan wanted possession of it. Could it be due to the shining face that is so uniquely presented in Scripture? It seems that God did not desire the body of Moses to be disturbed by man or the devil and buried him in a secret place.

Moses' face shone after seeing the glory of God. We read, "Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face..." (Deuteronomy 34:10) This special relationship may very well have made Moses' body something special that Satan wanted either to defile or to hide away for his own purposes. Regardless, a greater lesson is available to us about the spiritual war.

Satan Desires Authority

Jude 9 certainly reveals to us Michael's humility but it also reveals Satan's arrogance and desire for authority. Moses was God's servant in this life-- Satan did not rule him. Satan was determined to rule his body in death, though. He takes it upon himself to attempt to seize the body and meets Michael who defers the defense to the Lord. The Lord must have rebuked Satan since He takes the body to a place unknown and safely deposits it there.

Our God has the strength to stop Satan's attacks and defend His own. His ways and purposes are higher than our own and often beyond our understanding but we can trust Him through all occurrences. Satan desires authority but our God has authority. Praise be to the Ruler of All!

Disputing with Satan

What heresy is primarily being dealt with in the book of Jude?

Where is the account of Michael and Satan's dispute found? Who attests to that?

What is Michael's role among the angels? Where is that evidenced outside of Jude?

What was special about the body of Moses? What did God do with it?

Delayed in Persia

IN PREPARATION

Read Daniel 10.

What was Daniel doing before the messenger came to him?

When did God begin to hear Daniel's entreaties to Him?

How was the heavenly messenger delayed?

Where is the messenger going after he leaves Daniel? Why?

“But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.” (Daniel 10:13)

Daniel 10 introduces an unidentified heavenly being that spends the next two chapters revealing some of the most specific prophecy of future (for Daniel) world events in Scripture. Before this being begins, though, he comments on his delay of arrival to Daniel and explains that he was delayed in Persia due to the “withstanding” of a “prince” in that kingdom. More is revealed in this beings passing comments as well.

In this lesson we will consider some of the lessons we can learn from the words on this heavenly individual in this verse and the conversation that follows.

Spiritual War History

Nations rise and fall for many reasons. Understanding that actions have consequences does not, however, discount the workings of God and the heavenly host's affect on human history. The account of Daniel 10 begins “in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia,” which is about 533 B.C. (Daniel 10:1) The Persians had only taken control of Babylon about three years before, but the messenger reveals that spiritual events were in motion that would limit the time of the Persian rule. “Then he said, ‘Do you understand why I came to you? But I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia; I am going forth, and behold, the prince of Greece is about to come.’” (Daniel 10:20) The “princes” that the individual speaks of are hard to identify.



Delayed in Persia

Some believe they are individual kings, angels that move the nations, or evil angels warring against God's will. Whatever is meant, this angelic being and Michael apparently have effect on the things that they do, albeit sometimes with struggle. He informs Daniel that, at some point in the future, "the prince of Greece shall come." This comes back to mind in chapter 11 when the message is given, "Behold, three more kings are going to arise in Persia. Then a fourth... will arouse the whole empire against the realm of Greece." (Daniel 11:2)

These things did indeed come to pass. It was the fifth emperor of Persia, Xerxes, who took the armies of Persia to war against Greece. One famous battle during this attack was the battle of Thermopylae, where 300 Spartans held off the Persian forces for several days. The messenger then continues by informing Daniel that, "a mighty king will arise, and he will rule with great authority and do as he pleases." (Daniel 11:3) This "mighty king" refers to Alexander the Great and the Greek armies he controlled. (This fact is evidenced further in Daniel 11, as well as through comparison of the empires in Daniel 2 and 7.) Just as Daniel 10:20 speaks of the coming "prince of Greece," so does the vision refer to that fact, and so does history confirm it.

God has a vested interest in the affairs of the nations. A future lesson will deal with that topic specifically, but this account reveals to us how His angelic host is working among the nations to see to it that God's will is performed. Daniel's messenger says, "In the first year of Darius the Mede, I arose to be an encouragement and a protection for him." (Daniel 11:1) As long as God's will was for the Persians to continue, they would continue. And then the Greeks would come.

Persia and the People of God

The Babylonians were overthrown during the time of Daniel and the Persians put into place. (Daniel 5:30-31) A heavenly worker was tasked with being a protection and encouragement for Darius of Persia. (Daniel 11:1) But why? It would be under the first Persian rulers that the Israelites would be allowed to return to their land. God had a vested interest in the workings of the Persians since they ruled over the Jews and their homeland.

Delayed in Persia



Daniel 11 goes on to describe events that would effect the region around Jerusalem and the city itself during the coming centuries and even goes so far to describe the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans in chapter 12, which coincides with the establishment of an eternal kingdom made “without hands” during the days of the Romans. (Daniel 2:45) All of these seem like mere historical events to archaeologists and historians, but the spiritually minded person understands that the workings of the nations had tremendous spiritual impact regarding the coming of the Messiah, His death, the issuance of the gospel, and the removal of the old law.

Eternal Consequences

God and Satan both understand the importance of the nations and the workings. Because of this the servants of God go forth to do His will and the workers of the evil one seek to withstand them. These temporal occurrences have eternal consequences for mankind. We do not have the ability to know all of the spiritual ongoings concerning the nations but we do have the principles of God’s word to help us to remember God is in control, his angelic host is interacting with the nations, and we should do our part to shine as lights to all of the nations of the world. Christianity is the nation of God today. (John 18:36)

Delayed in Persia

Who was “about to come”? What nation was being referred to by the messenger?

Who came to the aid of the messenger? Was this helper continuing with him?

What impact did the Persian rulers have on the Jewish nation?

Name the next two empires after the Persians. Under what empire was the kingdom made “without hands” established?

The Army of God

IN PREPARATION

Read 2 Kings 6

Why did the king of Aram become angry with Elisha?

What did the attendant of Elisha see early in the morning?

What did Elisha pray the Lord would do for his attendant?

What did Elisha do with the blinded army?

“Then Elisha prayed and said, ‘O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.’ And the Lord opened the servant’s eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.” (2 Kings 6:17)

The king of Aram was warring against Israel but found his secret plans were made known to his enemies. At first he suspected a traitor in his midst but was then informed, “Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom.” (6:12) Therefore, the king sent to capture Elisha in Dothan. His army surrounded the city. What hope was there for Elisha? Elisha’s attendant was panicking when the prophet calms him and gives him the ability to see what God sends to defend His people.

What hope and reassurance this account must give to the people of God! We so often feel alone but we are not. The Lord does not abandon or forsake us! There are other important lessons for us to learn from this account.

The Lord of Armies

There are spiritual multitudes who follow our God. The army that was sent against Elisha is described as “a great army” that “surrounded the city.” Yet, Elisha says, “those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” (6:14, 16) Christians have been the minority on earth since the gospel first began to be preached on the day of Pentecost 2,000 years ago. While the kingdom grows and prospers at different times and places, God’s people are always outnumbered by those in rebellion to



The Army of God

Him on the earth. The same is not true in the spiritual realm. Revelation 12 speaks of the “stars” dragged down by Satan as only “a third of the stars of heaven.” (Revelation 12:4) The figurative nature of that statement at the least indicates to us that most of the spiritual host holds fast to God. Perhaps it is for this reason that Satan is referred to as the “god of this world” where so many stand against the Holy One. (2 Corinthians 4:4)

Multitudes in the army of God are again pictured in Psalm 68:14: “The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands...” The apostle John was given a vision of heaven in which he records, “Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands.” (Revelation 4:11) We are not alone in our service of God, nor in our spiritual fight. Let us be as comforted and Elisha’s attendant in knowing this knowledge.

Defender of His People

The army of God was not present with Elisha for nothing. The obvious implication is that Elisha would be defended by God through whatever means were necessary. The forces of wickedness seem strong to the naked eye, but this war is a spiritual one and the Lord’s forces are stronger.

Sennacherib, king of Assyria, was also once in a position to destroy the people of God. Hezekiah, the king of Judah, was no match for the army arrayed against him. The king prayed for aid from God and He answered, “I will defend this city to save it for My own sake...” (2 Kings 19:34) Our God keeps His word. “Then it happened that night that the angel of the Lord went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians.” (2 Kings 19:35)

Jesus also attests to the size and strength of God’s army. When Peter attempts to defend Him in the garden on the night of His betrayal, Jesus commands him to put up his sword. Peter is reminded by Jesus, “Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:53) Jesus

The Army of God



knew that He had but to utter the words and the murderous attempts of His enemies would be put to an end. He held His tongue, however, so the Scripture would be fulfilled to the salvation of our souls.

Our God is a defender of His people. May we always remember the words of the apostle, “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.” (Romans 12:19) Truly, our God has the strength and means to do so.

Becoming His Warrior

We should be striving to become one in our God’s army. A future lesson will be dedicated to our spiritual armament in its entirety, but for the moment let us reflect upon our place in this struggle. As Paul says of his work for the Lord,

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ...” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5) Are you warring on the side of the apostles and of Christ?

The Army of God

Christians are outnumbered in this realm. Are God's forces outnumbered in the spiritual realm? Give evidence for your answer.

What happened to Sennacherib's army? What does that suggest about the strength of the angelic host?

What did Paul encourage the Christians to do in Romans 12:19? Why should we trust that He is capable and willing of doing His part?

What were the weapons of Paul? What were they used for?

Times and Boundaries

IN PREPARATION

Read Acts 17.

In Athens, where did Paul begin trying to teach the gospel?

What did God make every nation from?

What did God predetermine about the nations?

What does God command all men to do? Why?

“He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation.” (Acts 17:26)

The work of the Lord took the apostle Paul all over the Roman world. In Acts 17 he finds himself in the city of Athens and, eventually, teaching at the Areopagus. As Paul considers their idolatry and the span of time since the world was formed he makes a powerful statement that reveals God’s hand at work in the nations of men. God, Paul says, “determined [the nations’] appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation.” But why would God take such an interest in these affairs of men? It was all related to the spiritual war being waged and which Paul is fighting in.

God’s Purpose Among the Nations

As studied in a former lesson, God’s ministers are working behind the scene among the nations. God works among the nations to cause the rise and fall of empires. Paul proclaims God’s purpose boldly; He says it was so “they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us...” (Acts 17:27) In other words, God raises up nations and casts them down for the benefit of spreading the gospel!

We can see the success of Rome through this lens. Why did the Messiah come during these days? Rome had united much of the world’s land and people under one banner, which gave a common language to most people. How much easier it was to



Times and Boundaries

spread the gospel in that environment than in former times! The Romans had built roads uniting the peoples of the world. How much easier to travel with the gospel than in former times! And how many benefits there must have been in the mind of God that you and I cannot fathom for the Christ and the gospel to come at that moment of history, which Paul calls “the fullness of time”! (Galatians 4:4) Understanding God’s purpose among the nations should drastically alter our view of the nation we live in and our view of other nations throughout history.

Prolonging a Nation’s Days

Certainly the hearts and actions of men affect God’s decision concerning the times and boundaries of nations. We understand that there is but one eternal kingdom-- the kingdom of God. No nation of man will endure forever. However, a nation is capable of prolonging (or shortening) the days that God gives it to dwell under the sun. Advice is given to all nations in the word of God with the purpose of exhorting them to do as God has instructed. Consider two texts on this issue:

“Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to any people.” (Proverbs 14:34)

“Do not think in your heart, after the LORD your God has cast them out before you, saying, ‘Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land’; but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out from before you.” (Deuteronomy 9:4)

Both of these passages speak concerning Gentile nations. In both cases we see that the decisions of these nations to live in sinful manners bring reproach and judgment from God. This lesson should not be ignored by nations today!

The Lord raises up nations and cast them down for the benefit of His gospel. If a nation’s unrighteousness is hindering the gospel work then that nation will not continue! On the other hand, if the righteousness of a nation is aiding the gospel to spread then God may prolong their days according to His will!

Times and Boundaries

Lessons for these United States

Consider the righteous things that have come from the peoples of these United States! The Restoration Movement began here and continues to flourish in many places. The wealth and generosity of Christians in our land has allowed the gospel to be spread all over the world! Even now, souls are being won for Christ in our area. But certainly we must recognize the anti-Christian trends taking hold of our home country.

Too often, individuals confuse material success with spiritual success. (Revelation 3:17-18) In doing so, nations often lose both. We should certainly pray that our friends and neighbors from sea to shining sea remember the true nature of spiritual blessings and seek to put the Lord first in their lives, as we must in ours. Collectively, the national sin and blasphemy is increasing and “sin is a disgrace to any people.” While we cannot know the mind of God, we can trust God’s word and should certainly encourage our brothers of the flesh to heed the warnings found within its pages.

Times and Boundaries

Why does God determine the times and boundaries of nations?

What might have been some of the reasons for the prospering of Rome before the coming of Christ?

Why did God drive out the nations from before the Israelites? Was it because of the Israelites' righteousness?

What relevant trends do you see in our nation? What lessons do you hope our nation will learn from God's word?

Changing Sides

IN PREPARATION

Read Colossians 1.

What has Jesus done for us according to this chapter?

What did Jesus have to do with creation?

What is Jesus the head of? What is He to have first place in?

What was the former condition of the Colossians Christians?

“For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son...” (Colossians 1:13)

Every Christian, the servants of God on earth in this spiritual war, has at one time been on the other side of the fight. Our allegiance is determined not merely by what we say but by what we do and the power of sin over us. In this lesson we will discuss our past and current conditions pertaining to our side in the spiritual struggle.

Domain of Darkness

Outside of the kingdom of Christ is the “domain of darkness.” Those in this domain are pictured in various ways in the inspired word. For instance, this same contrast is seen in Revelation 13 and 14 where the false prophet “causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead.” (Revelation 13:16) Thus, the world is set in contrast with those 144,000 who stand with Jesus who have “His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.” (14:1) Two groups are on the earth; one large that goes after the false religion, and one much smaller that stands with Christ. In that way the two “domains” or “authorities” are pictured. The domain of darkness, as discussed last lesson, is larger in the physical realm.

We are not by “default” in the domain of darkness. Rather, we enter this “authority” under the evil one when we sin and are

Changing Sides

thus separated from God. “But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.” (Isaiah 59:2) If God is light and “in Him there is no darkness at all,” then we understand that sin moves us away from the Light and puts us in darkness. If we are in darkness how can we expect to spend eternity in God’s light?

Paul speaks of the Colossian Christians’ former state while in the domain of darkness saying, “you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds...” (Colossians 1:21) If that is our condition we need to change sides in this spiritual war and be moved into the kingdom of God’s beloved Son!

Kingdom of Christ

Our “conveyance” into Christ’s kingdom is not accomplished by our own power. Rather, the gospel covenant put in place by God bestows this merciful gift upon us when we repent of our sins and are baptized into the body of Christ. Acts 2 contains an example of this truth. Upon hearing that they had killed the Son of God and that He was now resurrected as both Lord and Christ, the command was given to the people, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38) Soon thereafter Luke records this relevant detail: “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.” (Acts 2:41) Their souls were added to what? That question can be answered correctly in various ways: the church, one another, the kingdom of Christ!

Our addition to the kingdom is due to “the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.” (Colossians 1:12) It is only possible through the blood of Christ since in Him “we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” (1:14) We could not redeem ourselves from sin so the Father and Christ have done it for us. We are now part of the “kingdom of His beloved Son” and have been added to “the body, the church.” (Colossians 1:18) Now, we strive to live according to His precepts and to call more people into fellowship with the Son.

Changing Sides

Benefits Found in His Kingdom

There is good reason for us to desire a 'change of sides' in order to be put into Christ's kingdom.

First of all, it is only in His kingdom that forgiveness of sins can be found. That is the point of Colossians 1:13-- we have been "rescued" from the domain of darkness and "transferred" to Christ's kingdom. We needed to be saved from our sins and that salvation is found for those who have humbled themselves under His hand.

Secondly, we have fellow spiritual warriors in His kingdom. Our brothers and sisters of the faith are fighting the same battles that we are fighting. Their aid and encouragement helps us to make it through every day's struggles. We are to consider one another in order to build one another up. The apostle writes, "Let the word of Christ dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs..." (Colossians 3:16)

Finally, in Christ's kingdom we enjoy eternal life. Christ's kingdom will not always be His. The time is coming when it will be handed to the Father. "Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power." (1 Corinthians 15:24) When this day arrives we will join the Father around His throne and spend an eternity praising Him for our salvation.

Have you left the domain of darkness for the kingdom of God's Son? Don't delay! These benefits are only found in His kingdom!

Changing Sides

Besides Colossians 1, where is another text that makes a distinction between Christ's kingdom and the world? Explain that passage.

Explain the reaction of the people to the apostles' message in Acts 2. What were the people who were baptized 'added' to?

Can we earn our salvation? Who should be praised for it? How does Paul explain it in Colossians 1?

What are some of the benefits of being in Christ's kingdom?

Armor of God

IN PREPARATION

Read Ephesians 6.

What is our struggle against?

What is the evil one sending our way?

What advice does Paul give concerning their prayer life?

What kind of love should we have toward Christ?

“Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:11-12)

The full armor of God. This well known passage is written to Christians concerning the figurative armor they must don to win the spiritual fight they are engaged in. We are fighting the same fight today! Consider the attire what will make us fit for battle.

Christians' Kit

“Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” (Ephesians 6:14-17)

We should note that all of the pieces of armor for a Christian have been supplied to them by God. We are not told to clothe ourselves in things we must buy or with innate talents that some may have while others lack. Each of these things is given by God if the Christian is anxious to receive it.

Truth- Truth is not opinion. Truth is the objective reality of our spiritual struggle. It is given in the word. (John 17:17)

Armor of God

Righteousness- Since God has told us how to live righteously He expects us to do it. Our standards of morality and goodness are given to us in truth.

Preparation of the Gospel of Peace- This piece is on our feet because we are expected to preach the message, carrying it with us wherever we go. It takes preparation to do this well.

Faith- Faith is our shield because it is essential to holding off the assaults on our way of life and preaching from the world. We will not always know how to respond to every attack immediately, but our faith can guard us through any struggle.

Salvation- Salvation is to be worn now and fully received later. The knowledge that we are forgiven protects us and encourages us. We can even face death knowing that salvation is ours!

Word of God- The sword. This is the piece of kit above all others that a soldier clings to. We should cling to the word and keep it in our minds and on our hearts constantly!

The Importance of Being Armed

Having all of these pieces of armor will ensure that the Christian is ready to war against even the worst of spiritual enemies! Paul says we should “take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.” (Ephesians 6:13) Consider the Christian that does not properly prepare themselves for battle; they are weak, unknowledgeable, doubting, and eventually overtaken by the forces of darkness. How can a Christian stand firm without regular bible study and determination for godly living? A ‘half-faith’ will be ‘no-faith’ in due time! They will not be able to extinguish the arrows of the evil one and will be struck down where they stand.

It is through zealous prayer, study, and assembly with the saints that we attain this armor. We are exhorted, “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.” (Ephesians 6:10) Each of these pieces of armor are from the Lord and are thus how we become strong in Him. One cannot simultaneously reject what Christ has taught and commanded while also being “strong in the Lord,” although many attempt to live in such a paradox.

Armor of God

Warriors of God

People on the sidelines or far from the front lines in a war do not need to be covered in armor. This fact should help us to see ourselves in the manner that the Lord sees us. We are meant to be engaged in this spiritual war. We are to be training and bettering ourselves, we are to seek opportunities to engage our spiritual enemies, and we are to become veterans of this conflict. Too many are content to be unseasoned in our war. Let us rise up to the fight.

To mix metaphors that teach the same lesson, the Hebrew author states it in this manner: “For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.” (Hebrews 5:13-14) Trained senses that can discern good and evil have become efficient through “practice.” So do we become great warriors through practice. Don’t be content to be a sideline Christian, as though there is such a thing for we are always under attack, but one who seeks to be the strongest most heavily armed spiritual warrior this church has!

Armor of God

What are the pieces of armor given by Paul?

Who supplies us with the armor? How is that a comfort?

What happens to Christians who do not put on the full armor?

Explain the difference between a veteran warrior and new fighter. What lessons can Christians learn from the comparison?

War in the Heavens

IN PREPARATION

Read Revelation 12.

What is the woman wearing?

Describe the child the woman birthed.

What happened to Satan after his defeat?

What warning is given to the people of earth by the great voice?

“And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.” (Revelation 12:7-8)

A war is fought in Revelation 12 that results in Satan being thrown out of heaven in a final way. What spiritual battle is being described and when did it take place? This chapter is important for us since it describes the position of Satan and his angels before and after the blood of Jesus was spilled. The change that takes place when Satan is cast from heaven has a serious impact on the church and the spiritual war we are still fighting.

Satan in Heaven

Satan, the great dragon, is on earth in Revelation 12:3-4. He is seeking to devour the Messiah who was being born (12:1-2). Jesus is described as, “a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron...” (12:5) Satan attacked Jesus in various ways when He was born in the flesh. Soon after His birth Herod attempted to kill Jesus but His family fled to Egypt. (Matthew 2:13-20) Lesson 2 of this book discusses Jesus’ interaction with Satan during the wilderness temptations. Failing to destroy the Messiah in this way, Satan sought his victory in slaying Jesus on the cross. Yet, despite his activities on earth, the lost war between Satan and Michael results in Satan being “thrown down” (12:9) and having “no longer a place found for them in heaven.” (12:8) Was Satan still able to enter heaven before Jesus’

War in the Heavens

death, burial, and resurrection? The answer is, yes! We see him coming before God in the book of Job. (See Lesson 1.) And how could Satan be “the Accuser” if he was unable to come before God and accuse?

However, Satan lost his ability to approach God’s throne when the “child was caught up to God and to His throne” and his spiritual host was over-throne in the ensuing battle. Satan’s defeat means victory for those in Christ.

Victory in Jesus

After the battle was won by Michael and his angels Satan and his angels were thrown down to the earth. Then a loud voice announces,

“Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.” (12:10-11)

There is no accuser to attack those in Christ. There is no sin in Christ! (1 John 3:5) Those who are His and are faithful and true “even when faced with death” have nothing to fear before the throne of God. Christ’s victory is our victory!

Satan clung to his ability to accuse because he was seeking guilt not just in God’s people, but through them to accuse God Himself. This defeat through Christ has spelled Satan’s ultimate defeat, but in wrath he now has few options before his final casting to hell.

Attack on Earth

Satan was not humbled by his defeat. Instead, his wrath burns within him. The voice in heaven gives the warning, “Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.” (12:12) The dragon seeks to attack the faithful that brought the Messiah forth (of which Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a part, but the symbolism seems to apply to more than her alone) but he is



War in the Heavens

unsuccessful in destroying her. (12:13-16) Being further enraged we read, “[Satan] went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.” (12:17) This is certainly an image of the church on earth. Jesus is later seen standing with this group. (14:1) Satan’s desire is to destroy the church and satisfy his anger against God.

This image is fitting when compared with other Scripture that discusses the evil one. Peter exhorts the Christians, “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.” (1 Peter 5:8-9) Do you respect the threat that is focused against you?

It is in Satan’s interest to end our faith in Christ and faithful living. He will go to any lengths he can imagine to bring us back into the kingdom of darkness. If we are unaware of our role in this spiritual war we will be less alert to his attacks. Paul says, “be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” (Ephesians 5:15-17) Is your mind prepared for this mighty enemy? Do you see his attacks coming? Are you overcoming him?

In the next lesson we will discuss some of the lengths Satan will go to in order to tear us away from our Lord. May we be of those who do not love our lives, even when faced with death!

War in the Heavens

When did Satan lose his place of accusation before God? Why?

How are the people of God described in Revelation 12?

Where did Satan focus his wrath after being cast out of heaven? Why?

What should a Christian do to prepare for attacks on our faith?

Satan's Pet

IN PREPARATION

Read Revelation 13.

Who gave authority to the beast?

What does the mouth of the beast speak?

Who worships the beast? Who causes them to worship the beast?

What is the purpose of the "mark"?

“And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names... And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.” (Revelation 13:1-2)

In the last lesson we considered the casting out of Satan from heaven and the wrath that he has toward Christians. Revelation 13 continues the account to reveal the way Satan moved against the kingdom of God on earth. Oftentimes, bible students become so focused on the ‘trees’ that they miss the ‘forest,’ and that is especially true with regard to Revelation. Let us not forsake the important lessons of the book simply because some of the details of the figurative language are difficult to understand. In this lesson we will see the main point of Revelation 13 and how it relates to the spiritual war being waged around us today.

Empire with Purpose

The Roman Empire is given in a figure in Revelation 13. It is pictured as a beast rising up out of the sea. This beast is given authority by Satan and speaks blasphemies against God. But why is Satan taking charge of an empire? Chapter 12 ended with a statement of purpose for Satan: “[He] went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.” (12:17) The Roman Empire is one manner in which Satan made war. We read of the beast, “It



Satan's Pet

was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him.” (13:7) This empire was now Satan’s pet to do his will against God’s people.

The Roman Empire shed Christian blood for centuries. Beginning with Nero who is said to have burned Christians alive to light his garden until Diocletian’s “Great Persecution,” the faithful were haunted by local and empire wide sufferings. The tortures committed upon the sons of God are gruesome to mention and are recorded in numerous writings including Eusebius’ Church History. Meanwhile, the rest of the world followed after the beast with relative freedom. As John records about the beast, “All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.” (13:8) Why would so many people buy into the lies of Satan and the beast?

False Religion

Satan’s beast is propped up by another beast that arises; false religion. “He performs signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs...” (13:13-14) Whether these signs were deceptive tricks or miraculous occurrences is not relevant. The affects were literal enough; people worshiped the beast because false religion propped him up.

False religion has often been a tool of men in authority in order to control the people. When the northern kingdom separated from Judah, Jeroboam used idolatry to keep the people from going back to Jerusalem. “The king consulted and made two golden calves, and he said to them, ‘It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt.’” (1 Kings 12:28) Jeroboam’s actions are not so different from the works of Satan in Revelation 13. The empire is set to do the butchering and persecuting while the false religion of the day justifies the empire and causes all to worship it. Then and now, Christians should be very mindful of rulers’ attempts to manipulate religion for personal or governmental gain.



Satan's Pet

Lessons to Learn

Satan was bound from deceiving the nations in this way for a time until Gog and Magog are raised up (Revelation 20:7-9), but that does not mean he is not still at work through the hearts of wicked men in positions of authority. Let us learn these lessons from Revelation 13.

Governments Often Do Evil

While it is true that God intends governments to perform justice and uphold what is good (Romans 13:1-4), we must realize that governments often do evil. Something is not good or evil based on whether or not they are in the employ of the states; God determines such things alone. Understanding this truth and teaching our children and brethren to do what is right before God regardless of their employer is just as important today as it was in the first century.

The Majority is Usually Wrong

The Roman people were patriotic and held Rome up as a great light. They were loyal to her and her cause. They stood with her even as she killed Christians. They were wrong. The majority usually is wrong! The words of Jesus serve as a good reminder for us: "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way." (Luke 6:26)

Christians Aren't Alone

Even though outnumbered and persecuted, Jesus stands with His people. (Revelation 14:1) No matter how many stand against us Jesus will stand with us as long as we walk in truth. That fact should be remembered by God's children no matter what the political temperature of their days!

The beast was Satan's pet to perform his will. But Jesus is God's Son to execute judgment and righteousness on the earth. That empire fell and so will all people who stand against Him.

Satan's Pet

What empire is the beast representing in Revelation 13? How does the book make that fact clear?

What is the job of the second beast? How does it deceive the world?

What is another example of false religion being used for political purposes? What lesson should Christians today learn about rulers and religion?

Summarize some lessons we can learn from Revelation 13.

The Everlasting Kingdom

IN PREPARATION

Read Daniel 2.

How many kingdoms were revealed in Nebuchadnezzar's dream?

What became of the stone that struck the statue?

Who is the head of gold?

What did the king think of Daniel's God after the message?

“In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.” (Daniel 2:44)

Nebuchadnezzar was given in a vision in a dream that none of his servants could interpret. Daniel came and revealed both the dream and its interpretation. The content of this dream is just as important today as it was back then. In this lesson we will be considering the kingdom of God and its everlasting nature as revealed to the king of Babylon and interpreted by God's prophet, Daniel.

4 Kingdoms of Men

A statue is seen that is made up for four distinct parts: a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, and legs of iron with feet partly of iron and partly of clay. (Daniel 2:31-33) Daniel gives the interpretation as being the Babylonian kingdom (the head of gold) and the next three kingdoms to come: the Medo-Persian Empire (silver), Greco-Macedonian Empire (bronze), and the Roman Empire (iron and clay). These same empires are prophesied again in Daniel but as animals later in the book. (Daniel 7:1-8) Each empire is described with both a chronological timeline and unique attributes to identify it. Having hindsight as we do, these prophecies are astounding and accurate. If the nations of men alone were prophesied in this way we would be further assured in the inspiration of Scripture, but even more than this is revealed.



The Everlasting Kingdom

A Kingdom Made Without Hands

Nebuchadnezzar's dream continues until "a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them." (Daniel 2:34) This stone is not a part of the statue that represents these kingdoms of men. It is not built by man but is "cut out without hands." And it strikes the statue during the days of the fourth empire; the Roman Empire. This stone "became a great mountain and filled the whole earth." (2:35) As Daniel interprets the vision, "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people..." (2:44) In this dream of Nebuchadnezzar we see what will happen (God will set up a kingdom), we see that this kingdom will be unlike the nations of men (made "without hands"), and we see when the kingdom is coming (during the days of the Roman Empire)!

We also see that there would be conflict between the fourth empire and the kingdom of God, as noted by the destruction of the feet of clay and iron by the stone. In the last lesson saw the spiritual forces at work behind the Roman Empire's persecution of the saints. Satan had raised up these wicked rulers in order to destroy God's kingdom. However, Daniel 2 revealed centuries beforehand that the kingdom of God would overcome this enemy. We stand in Christ even today on the bones of God's defeated enemy.

The nature of this kingdom is indeed different from all other kingdoms. Jesus explains its unique nature in various ways saying, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm," and, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst." (John 18:36, Luke 17:20-21) Just as it was not built by the hands of men nor can it be destroyed like the kingdoms of men. Satan's attempts to tear down God's structure have always been unsuccessful and always will be. Although the nation will stand, though, we must take heed to ourselves lest we fall. (1 Corinthians 10:13)



The Everlasting Kingdom

The Rule of the Messiah

There is one last powerful statement about the kingdom of God we will consider. Daniel says, “it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms.” (2:44) What does that mean? The Roman Empire did not rule concurrently with the other three kingdoms mentioned, but afterwards. In what way, then, did the kingdom of God crush and put an end to all of the aforementioned kingdoms? This statement has more to do with the authority of the Messiah than it has to do with the specific kingdoms described in Daniel 2.

The Messiah’s authority would be over all nations. Psalm 2 speaks of the authority granted Christ by God saying, “Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.” (Psalm 2:8-9) The similarity of imagery between the crushing stone and the rule of Jesus reveals the power and authority granted to Him at the Father’s right hand. (Matthew 28:18-20) No nation can stand against His will, whether it be the Roman Empire or the United States.

The authority of Christ gives hope to Christians not only as the people He will avenge, but also as those who will be granted to sit with Him in His authority. Although we may sometimes be trampled by nations, Christ gives us the eternal promise, “He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken into pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father.” (Revelation 2:26-27) The powerless will be made powerful by Christ and will sit with Him on His throne!

The everlasting kingdom of God is the defeat of Satan. He can not overcome what God has established in the hearts of men. He has been cast out of heaven and cannot have victory over God’s people on earth. He is full of wrath and knows that His time is short. Our final victory will give way to Satan’s final defeat!

The Everlasting Kingdom

What four kingdoms of men were revealed to Nebuchadnezzar by Daniel?

What are the unique attributes of the kingdom of God in the Daniel 2 vision?

Explain the nature of the kingdom of God. What impact should understanding its nature have on our mindset?

What is the meaning of the stone crushing and putting to an end “all of these”?

The Final Victory

IN PREPARATION

Read 1 Corinthians 15.

What is of “first importance” in Paul’s preaching?

When will those who are Christ’s be raised?

How does Paul describe the bodies to be given to the raised?

Flesh and blood cannot inherit what?

“Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death.” (1 Corinthians 15:24-26)

Some in Corinth were doubting the resurrection. Paul is shocked to hear these things and plainly rebukes those who teach and those who tolerate such doctrine. “For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.” (15:16-17) The apostle then teaches the truth about resurrection from the dead: Jesus was the first to be raised and when He returns He will raise us up as well. Having resurrected His people, His kingdom, this verse tells us that He will hand the kingdom over to the Father, all of His enemies will be put down, and the last enemy, death, will be abolished. In this lesson we will consider the power and victory of the saints to be seen in this final victory in the spiritual war!

Judgment of Satan

Paul tells us that “all rule and all authority” contrary to His own will be abolished, and John’s vision makes clear that this judgment specifically includes Satan: “And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” (Revelation 20:10) This will be God’s final victory over Satan. The Accuser who has



The Final Victory

been cast out of heaven and came to persecute the saints of earth will now be cast to hell where he will never trouble anyone again. The groundwork is already laid for his defeat. God's power over him was only questioned by Satan himself. Our God will not suffer this enemy to continue his reign of terror into eternity!

Defeat of Death

The destruction of death is given by both Paul and John saying, "the last enemy that will be abolished is death" and "death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire." (1 Corinthians 15:26, Revelation 20:14) This follows reasonably from the gospel hope. "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law." (1 Corinthians 15:56) Jesus destroyed the power of sin in His death and resurrection. Death only held power over us through sin. Therefore, death's power is gone already and the dead merely await the call of our Lord! On the last day, "when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" (15:54)

Our lives are consumed with concerns about time because, in our mortality, our time is limited. The grave awaits all of us. Our final victory over death will usher in our new reality of eternity with our God without the limitations of time. Death will have no dominion over us!

Heavenly Bodies

Our bodies are perishable. They wear out and grow old. They are not fit for eternity. "Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable... For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality." (15:50, 53) We do not know how this body will appear but only that it will be of a spiritual substance fit for eternity with our Creator. (15:39-40) Is your body growing weak and frail? Look forward to the spiritual body to be prepared for you by God! Live in a way to attain to this hope.

The Final Victory



Heavenly Home

Satan is cast to hell, death is destroyed, we have been given new bodies fit for an eternity, and then we are prepared to enter our last home-- our heavenly home. Jesus will “hand over the kingdom to the God and Father... then the Son Himself will be subjected to the One who subjected all thing to Him, so that God may be all in all.” (15:24, 28) Under the comfort and loving arms of God we will spend eternity, days without end, enjoying the light and life that flows from the throne of God. Our spiritual war will have ended and given way to an eternal day. The fellowship once enjoyed between man and God in the Garden of Eden will then be fully realized as we meet our God face to face.

This final victory is believed on by many but sought by few. A shallow, empty, lifeless faith will not attain to this goal. We must have the courage to battle the forces of darkness now so that we may attain to this victory later. We must seek to guide others, family, friends, and neighbors, into the Way that they may bask in His glory as well.

The apostle Paul writes near the end of his life, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:7-8) Are you fighting the fight of faith in this spiritual war? Will you attain to the hope as the apostle? May we all receive the crown of righteousness together!

The Final Victory

What false teaching prompted the writing of 1 Corinthians 15?

Describe the final judgment of Satan.

What becomes of death? How do our new bodies relate to the fate of death?

Are you as committed as the Scripture says you should be to the spiritual war? If not, what are some things you plan on doing to join the battle?

This book belongs to:
