

## War Games – Behind Enemy Lines

9/20/20

Ephesians 6:10-18

Sunday AM

Months prior to Dec. 7, 1941 – the Japanese military secretly planned/plotted their attack on Pearl Harbor. For months, they secretly visited Hawaii pretending to be on holiday while gathering intel, they flew secret missions over the islands to take photographs, they even engaged in casual conversations w/ U.S. military personnel to learn their patterns – and it paid off. Their reconnaissance was impeccable – and their attack was near flawless. The key to their attack was simple – **know your enemy and catch them when they least expect it**. And as history shows, the Japanese caught the U.S. sleeping, crippling the Pacific fleet and claiming the lives of 2,403 soldiers/civilians.

I need to tell you something important you might not realize – **We too are at war!** Only it's not against flesh/blood, but against principalities/spiritual forces of evil. We're engaged in a battle against an enemy who knows us better than we know him and who's waiting to attack us when we least expect it.

Last week, we began a study on the reality of spiritual warfare. Today we're continuing our study by learning about the enemy in this battle. (see Ephesians 6:10-19)

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle isn't against flesh/blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms. So, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, w/ the belt of truth buckled around your waist, w/ the breastplate of righteousness in place, and w/ your feet fitted w/ the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, w/ which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Pray in the Spirit on all occasions w/ all kinds of prayers and requests. W/ this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.*

In case you missed last week, we learned we're in a real spiritual battle against a sinister/crafty adversary. Against an enemy who's been around since the dawn of creation – ***who wants to terrorize your soul, make you worthless for the cause of Christ, and usher in misery/spiritual defeat in every aspect of your life.***

**Question** – What comes to your mind when you hear the name Satan/Lucifer? Do you imagine a long-tailed, cloven hooped jester w/ horns in a red suit? Or is your devil just a symbol of evil like it is for so many. Truth is – *he's neither; but he is real. And his ambition is to thwart anything good and of God in/around our lives.*

Now, we're first introduced to Satan in Genesis 3, when he comes to tempt Adam/Eve – but it certainly not the last time we see him. In fact, Satan is seen some **177x** thru-out the Bible. For example, we see him in Job and in Isaiah/Ezekiel. We see him in Matthew 4 at the temptation of Jesus and a number of times in the book of Revelation. In the Gospels, Jesus, spoke about Satan and the demonic at least **25x**.

**BTW** – for simplicity sake, when I speak of Satan, I'm speaking of the demonic too. Satan might be a single, created being, he's also the head of a fallen, angelic army standing against/thwarting God's will/way.

**It's like in the Gulf War** – when the allies we're fighting against Sadaam and the Iraqi regime. Allied forces weren't in actual hand-to-hand combat w/ Sadaam, but they were in a war against his influence and armies. In like manner, We're in a battle against Satan and his demonic forces/philosophies.

While I'm not excited to spend a Sunday talking about God's enemy, there's much to learn to help us in overcoming the devil's schemes. Today, I want us to look at his origin, offense, operation, and objective.

## I Satan's ORIGIN Ezekiel 28:12-17

*You had everything going for you. You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom/perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, God's garden. Dressed in splendor – your robe studded w/ jewels: carnelian, peridot, beryl moonstone, onyx, jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald, all in settings of engraved gold. A robe was prepared for you the day you were created. **You were the anointed guardian cherub.** I placed you on the mount of God. You strolled in magnificence among the stones of fire. From the day of your creation you were sheer perfection, and then imperfection/evil were detected in you. In much buying/selling you turned violent, you sinned! I threw you, disgraced, off the mount of God. I threw you out – you, the anointed angel-cherub. No more strolling among the gems of fire for you! Your beauty went to your head. You corrupted wisdom by using it to get worldly fame. I threw you to the ground, sent you sprawling before an audience of kings to let them gloat over your demise...*

### A His PERSON

From this text, we learn that Satan is a created being who was the highest ranking of God's angelic beings.

Ezekiel described him as flawless – perfect in being and exalted in position. As God's creation, Satan was the light bearer for God – called to reflect the light and glory of God to the creation.

Interesting – the jewels mentioned by Ezekiel are the same jewels that adorned in the breastplate of the High Priest – which was a garment to reflect God's glory. I think this gives us insight into his designated position.

### B His POSITION

Ezekiel says Satan position was to be the **anointed guardian cherub** – cherubs are the highest-ranking angels assigned the duty of covering the mercy seat of God to protect the holiness of God – see Isaiah 6.

Evidently, God gave Satan the role of directing the angels in worship to declare He is holy, holy, holy. *Some scholars believe his role was to receive the worship of the angels below him so that he could pass it on to God above him* – to ensure that no adoration would ever be diverted away from God. Meaning – Satan's created purpose was to be in God's presence to reflect God's glory/honor and to protect the holiness of God – until he decided he wanted it for himself.

### C His POWER

Now I want to be careful in what I say b/c Satan is both powerful/powerless. As a created being, his abilities are limited, yet he has vast experience/superiority over mankind – so, Satan is not a being to be trifled w/. Yet rest assured, he's **NOT** God – but was created by God. So, he's not omnipresent, omnipotent, or omniscient – he can only do what God allows.

When God says, 'Stay!' Satan must stand like a dog by the table while the saints feast on God's comfort. He doesn't dare snatch even a tidbit for the Master's eye is always upon him. *William Gurnall*

Yet don't be fooled. Just b/c Satan is no match for God doesn't mean he's powerless and no match for you. Too often, we either (1) **underestimate** his power or (2) we **overestimate** his power. But Satan isn't the alter ego to God – he's not bad god; he is a created, fallen angel whose power has been granted by God.

## II Satan's OFFENSE

*From the day of your creation you were sheer perfection and then imperfection/evil were detected in you...  
Your beauty went to your head. You corrupted wisdom by using it to get worldly fame.*

Here, we discover Satan's fall occurred b/c his beauty, position, and power went to his head – and in pride, he tried to take for himself what belonged to God. So, instead of reflecting God's glory to pass on to God the worship due Him – he sought to steal it for himself.

Now before we chide Satan for his choice, we need to remember that this is our failure as well. **All sin is a decision to turn from God to a way that seems right to ourselves** – it's a decision to take the glory that belongs to God and to hold on to it for ourselves.

Let me show you Satan's offense from Isaiah 14:12f

*How you've fallen from heaven, morning star! You've been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart "I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mt. Zaphon (sacred mt. of Baal). I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." Isaiah 14:12f*

- You said – **I will ascend to the heavens** – that is, Satan believes he should be sitting on God's throne b/c he thinks he's more worthy.
- You said – **I will raise my throne above the stars** – the stars refer to the other angelic beings. Satan wants to have dominion/autonomous power over the angelic so that they bow/worship him.
- You said – **I will sit enthroned on the mount** – Satan wants to rule over the created order.
- You said – **I will ascend above the clouds** – refer to the **shekinah** glory of God. Satan was declaring that he should even rule over God.
- You said – **I will make myself like God** – this is his ultimate agenda; Satan wants everything God has and is willing to do whatever isn't God to get it.

## III Satan's OPERATION

For simplicity sake, let's separate Satan's operation by its **structure** and his evil, deceitful **strategies**.

### A The STRUCTURE of the Enemy

*For our struggle isn't against flesh/blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms...*

It should go w/out saying, based on the words **schemes** and **struggle** – that this unseen battle we're engaged in is against a highly organized and intelligent adversary. W/out question, our greatest enemy is **not** in the world we see, as corrupt/wicked as it can be – no... our greatest enemy is in a spiritual world we can't see.

In v. 12 we discover Satan has a highly organized, demonic hierarchy. You might think of this hierarchy in military terms where there are generals, colonels, captains, lieutenants, sergeants, corporals and privates.

**Rulers** refers to those demons who make the decisions, **authorities** are the ones to pass on the decisions to the **powers /spiritual forces** who execute the plan.

Many scholars believe the demons who make up the **powers of this dark world**, are those who've infiltrated the political systems/organizations of this world w/ the intent to bring them under the influence of Satan, to encourage evil to reign, and to manipulate any human to do their bidding. Scary!

**An example** of this occurred in **Daniel 10:13**. When Daniel was in Persia, he tried to pray, but he indicates his prayers were being hindered by someone he called – *the prince*. He's not talking about a human being; he was talking about a demonic spirit over Persia. So, Daniel said the archangel, Michael, had come to fight against this prince of Persia for his prayers to get thru.

Meanwhile, those demons who make up **spiritual forces of evil** are those who proliferate the most wretched lies/immoralities that satisfy the desires of the flesh including – greed, lust, murder, idolatry, etc.

Possibly the best description of this idea I've found is in a book by C.S. Lewis – **Screwtape Letters**. If you've never read it, it's a fictional account of spiritual warfare where a demon named **Wormwood** writes letters to a higher-level demon (**Screwtape**) seeking insight/advice on how to control/carry out his assignment. In these letters, Lewis gives likely strategies of how the demonic is at work to kill, steal, and destroy our lives, families, churches, and nations.

## B The **STRATEGIES** of the Enemy

The second aspect of Satan's operation deals w/ his strategies/tactics. Let's quickly refer to last week...

**schemes** (*methodias*) means to gain the upper hand by trickery/deceit thru subtle, crafty taylor-made methods.

While Satan has a number of methods to try to defile, demoralize, defeat, and destroy us – his big 3 strategies include temptation, accusation, and blinding the truth.

- He **TEMPTS** us to Sin

*When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God can't be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. Jm. 1:13-15*

**when** – explains that temptation is coming – it is unavoidable/inescapable – we'll all experience it.

**tempted** – a *fishing* term referring to luring a target into a trap by setting the bait. James explains that Satan tempts our flesh patterns/desires to get us to act in sin.

Satan solicits everyone to act by their fleshly nature to get them to satisfy/gratify themselves. He glories when our actions reflect his evil ways to defy God and deny God's glory.

- He **ACCUSES** of being Unworthy

Not only does he tempt us to sin; he accuses us of being unworthy. Once we do his bidding – he piles on the guilt, shame, and regret to hold us down.

**Revelation 12:10** says – *He is the accuser of the brethren* and that he accuses us before God day/night. And his objective is simple – he seeks to convince us we're not worthy of God's love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness. His ambition is to render us useless thru guilt/shame/regret so that we'll turn away from God.

- He **BLINDS** us to the Truth

*The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:4*

**Satan is a liar.** He hates the truth so he tries to blind us to it. Listen, the devil hates you b/c God loves you – and anything God loves he hates. The devil doesn't want you to know God love so he seeks to twist the truth to make evil – good and good – evil.

It reminds me of a quote I read this week – *First, we overlook evil. Then we permit evil. Next, we legalize evil. Then we promote evil. So, we can celebrate evil. Until finally, we persecute people who still call it evil.*

This sinister plot is to blind us to the truth and to force us to live in a manner opposite of God's heart/will.

#### IV Satan's **OBJECTIVE**

He does these things to kill, steal, and destroy. To prevent/pervert God's will/Word in any way.

- He wants to **defeat/defame** you to render you *useless* to the will/work of God/God's people.
- He wants to **manipulate/confound** you to use you *against* the will/work of God/God's people.

**So, this is our enemy** – and if I were being honest, based on what I've just shared from God's Word – it is quite depressing news. In fact, if I were to end right today, I fear we'd all walk away discouraged. But I have some really good news...

B/c God so loved the world, He stepped off His throne in heaven and stepped into flesh in the person of Jesus Christ – to live a sinless, perfect life and to die on an old rugged cross where He was pierced for our transgressions/crushed for our iniquities – so that by His stripes – we all could be healed/rescued from our sin into a personal/eternal relationship w/ God.

When Jesus cried from the cross – *tetelestai* – ***it is finished*** – God provided a way for us to be set free of the devil's ***stranglehold*** over our lives and to give us daily power overcome the ***strongholds*** the devil seeks to erect in our lives. We can overcome Satan's wicked schemes when we trust in the Lord and choose to live under the influence and in the power of the H.S. – and the result is remarkable, even miraculous.

*You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, b/c greater is the One who lives in you than he who is in the world. 1 John 4:4*