

# Revelation 9 – Spiritual Warfare

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[ 0 : 00 ] We have no other details to add to the birth of our granddaughter other than that she was born. Really, the details, for the details, you need to ask Laurie.

I just know that she's arrived. I have seen her and held her. And she is as beautiful as Laurie said that she was on Friday. So there you go.

I didn't make her cry and I didn't drop her. Two goals for life for any man. So we are in Revelation chapter 9.

So if you have a Bible, you're going to need a Bible this morning. And like the best introduction I can give to Revelation 9 is not only just to hold tight, as in we're going to be moving fast, we're going to be moving strong.

But if you've ever wondered about the state of the world and why things seem to be difficult and challenging and troubling, I think Revelation 9 answers many of those questions.

[ 1 : 08 ] So the chapter itself divides neatly into three parts. So let me just give you a real quick outline. And if you're taking notes, this isn't on the screen, unfortunately.

But if you're taking notes, it's actually pretty self-explanatory. Verses 1 to 12, you've got the fifth trumpet is sounded. All right, part of these judgments from God, where God is partly judging the world.

He is partly preparing the world for the return of Jesus to set up his millennial kingdom. All right. So the fifth trumpet is sounded and demons are released from the bottomless pit.

Woo. Sounds great. Right. Then verse 13, the sixth trumpet is sounded and a third of humanity dies as a result of demonic destruction.

And in verses 20 and 21, we read the sober reality of the power of sin. So what we're going to see again is a parallel to the Egyptian plagues.

[ 2 : 17 ] Now, when we read the Egyptian plagues there in Exodus, we read constantly that it was God's hand that brought the plagues. God stretched out his hand and normally in response to Pharaoh's hand.

So Pharaoh stretched out his hand and did something. And in response, God stretched out his hand to do something. But the psalmist indicates that that hand was in the way of sending, destroying angels.

So there in Psalm chapter 78, verse 49, he, that is God, let loose on them, that is the Egyptians, is burning anger, wrath and indignation and distress, a company of destroying angels.

What actually came against Egypt in the plagues there in Exodus was God's strength being shown in his hand by sending, destroying angels.

And the psalmist believes that what was coming against Egypt was this supernatural action of God in sending messages from God.

[ 3 : 25 ] And what we see in this chapter is something similar. We noticed last time that the trumpets parallel the plagues of Egypt.

And this morning we see this idea of sending, destroying angels. And so hold fire, hold tight. Here we go. Verse one. The fifth angel blew his trumpet and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth. And he, that is the star. So that tells us immediately that this isn't a near earth object, a satellite or an asteroid. The star is a he.

And he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. If there's any time we want music to accompany it, this would be this chapter, right?

So who is the he? Who is the star? And look, honestly, there are so many attempts to identify who this is. Everything from Satan to the Antichrist to Mohammed to Martin Luther to Donald Trump to whoever the next bad guy is, right?

[ 4 : 33 ] The text says that the star has a heavenly origin. Notice that. He came from where? He came from heaven. So he had a heavenly origin.

So just by reading your Bible, you can count out nine out of ten conspiracy theories. Just by reading your Bible. And the events that were about to take place makes it obvious that this star is a supernatural being.

So let's talk about two of the possibilities. Obviously, I favor one over the other, but I'll give you two of the most plausible possibilities. The first one is that this is Satan.

Jesus himself said in Luke chapter 10, I saw in the past Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Right? Later on, we'll read in Revelation 12, the great dragon was thrown down.

That's the ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan, deceiver of the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth and his angels were thrown down with him. But notice that in both instances, the one falling or being thrown down is named.

[ 5 : 37 ] This is why I don't really buy this theory that this is Satan. Both times, Jesus and John identify the angel as Satan.

Recognizable. In this instance, there's no name given. So it could be Satan, but I'm not convinced. My best suggestion to you is that this is an archangel.

And it seems that this angel is the same angel we read about in Revelation 20, verse 1. So there in Revelation 20, verse 1, we read, I saw, John says, I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain.

So it seems to me that chapter 9, verse 1 and chapter 20, verse 1 are the same angel. They're doing pretty much the same thing. If that is the case, we have one good angel who holds the key to the pit, but has two different missions.

I think this will become clear as we look at this chapter together. Here in Revelation 9, the mission is to release what is bound in the bottomless pit. And in chapter 20, his mission is to actually do the opposite, which is to bind Satan in the bottomless pit.

[ 6 : 56 ] Now, the best candidate for this angel is a guy I mentioned last week. And this is one of the archangels by the name of Uriel.

Now, he appears nowhere in the Bible. So some of you will be like, what the heck? What are you doing? What are you doing? So important that you understand and we understand that John the Apostle is not only drawing from Old Testament imagery, but he is also drawing from what we might call inter-testimonial or Second Temple literature.

Okay? Now, I know that's like heavy. But, so for example, many of you have heard of something, a book called First Enoch.

All right? It's not the Bible. Can I just say it's not the Bible? Did you hear me correctly? It's not the Bible. But John clearly has First Enoch or some understanding of First Enoch.

He understands what's written because actually many times he's not quoting directly from it, but he's alluding to it. And First Enoch itself is alluding to some of the Jewish rabbinic tradition that we don't necessarily have in our Bible because we don't believe that it's authoritative.

[ 8 : 14 ] All that to say is, the best guess is that this guy is Uriel. And in fact, one of the Jewish historical writings like First Enoch, this guy is called Uriel of Tartarus.

Tartarus is Greek for the abyss. The abyss, the bottomless pit. Okay? Now, all of that to say is, it could be, it might not be.

All right? Just go and chew on that. So, it's possible that we have one angel who is responsible for opening and closing.

So, and we know that, you know, if you read the Old Testament, it's a little bit of a tangent, but we read in the Old Testament that other archangels like Michael and Gabriel, they have specific jobs. They have specific tasks.

So, for example, we associate Michael as being the guardian of Israel. We see that. Gabriel is the one who brought the messages about Jesus to people who are going to be like in the nativity scene.

[ 9 : 18 ] All right? So, we do understand that the archangels have a specific role. And it seems that whoever this angel is, he is responsible for, he gets the authority to open and close the bottomless pit to bind and loosen that which is in it.

And what we see the angel do is there in verse 2, as I said, he opened the shaft of the bottomless pit. Or in Greek, the bottomless pit is abyss.

Abyss. Not to be confused with the 1996 James Cameron film. The abyss is mentioned nine times in the New Testament, but only twice outside of Revelation.

Once by Jesus and once by Paul. So, you remember in Luke chapter 8, we get this story of Jesus where he crosses over the Galilee and he reaches the area of the Gadarenes.

And he is met by a man who had demons possessing him. and Jesus commanded the demons to come out of this man and then he and they have this little conversation that goes something like this. Jesus asked him, what is your name? And he said, legion for many had demons had entered him. Now, I don't know whether that's to be taken literally because a legion represents 6,000 Roman soldiers. So 6,000 demons possessing a man, I think we agree is quite a lot. I think the idea is that he's saying, I'm not alone. You know, however many there are, I'm not by myself. And so what we read in verse 31 of Luke chapter 8 is that they, plural, begged him, Jesus, not to command them to depart into the abyss or the bottomless pit.

[11:06] So that's our phrase in Revelation 8, in Revelation 9, the bottomless pit. Now, Jesus didn't stop and question the reality of the abyss.

Right? He didn't say, oh, legion, you are misinformed. The abyss is actually referring to the Arab invasions of Europe in the 8th century. He didn't say, oh, you are mistaken.

These are the demonic delusions that happened, came upon the Jews in the Roman Jewish war in 70 AD. He didn't say that. He said, you can either go there or you can go to the pigs.

Right? So Jesus, in that conversation, upholds the reality of this place, the abyss, the bottomless pit. Later in Revelation, we see that the beast comes out of this abyss.

Revelation 11, when they had finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them. Revelation 17, the beast that you saw was and is not and is about to rise from where?

[12:22] The bottomless pit. So the abyss seems to be a real, although supernatural place. I'm going to suggest a bit later that this is perhaps the same place, although not identical, the same place as where the lake of fire is located.

But the thing is, is that it's supernatural because you're not going to be able to dig a hole in the ground and find it.

Right? We were talking just this week, Laurie and I, trivia over dinner, about where, how deep the deepest pit was in the world. Do we know?

It is in Russia, 12 kilometers deep. Like in anyone's measure, that's a long way down, right? But, you know, they're not, they're not finding, it's not called the bottomless pit.

There is a bottom to that. So, so it exists, but it exists in the spiritual realm. And this angel was given the key to unlock it. And what makes this so terrifying is actually in Jewish theology and more important, second temple Jewish theology, which is what John is drawing from, is that the abyss is the place.

[13:42] Now get this, this is the place where the watchers live. Now I know that like, that's not a Stephen King novel, right? Or it might be, but it's not, right?

We've already seen a number of angelic orders in Revelation. And what I mean by angelic orders, categories of angels. There's no, it's easy for us to go, oh, there's an angel, or it's talking about an angel.

But angels is a category of creation, all right? So we have the cherubim, category of angel. We have the seraphim, different category of angel. I suggested that the 24 elders are a category of angel.

We have archangels, and we have any other number of angelic beings that are created beings. Well, in Daniel chapter 4, we get introduced to a different type of angelic being, and they're called watchers.

Now, that just term just freaks me out, right? But in Daniel chapter 4, Daniel says that, And another name for a watcher, potentially a holy one, come down from heaven.

[15:02] So we have this new class of angelic being that we haven't been introduced to before in Revelation, appearing in Daniel. And sometimes in the Old Testament, they're referred to as watchers, and sometimes they're referred to simply as holy ones.

And it seems that the holy ones, or the watchers, make up a council before God. Now, if you've read Job, you'll be familiar with this, that there is a council of angelic being that meets before God.

They could be, and I'm not suggesting that they are, but it's just food for thought. They could be the same as the 24 elders. It throws some problems, but just have a munch on that.

But they could be different. So, for example, in Psalm 89, the psalmist says this, For who in the skies can be compared to the Lord? Who amongst the heavenly beings is like the Lord, a God, greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones?

The psalmist is saying, even in the holy, even within the holy ones, there's none like God.

[16:15] Daniel chapter 4, verse 17, the sentence is by decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones. Job 1, verse 6, Now, what we learn is that not all of the watchers continued as holy ones.

They were not all good and righteous, entirely devoted to God. Like, if you've been around church and you know a little bit about Christian theology, you'll know how Satan fell.

Satan turned towards God, and we talk about the third of the angels were cast down. In the context of speaking about these holy ones that sinned against God, Job says in verse 18 of chapter 4, Really enlightening is what Peter says in Peter chapter 2, verse 4, 2 Peter chapter 2, verse 4.

He says this, Check that out. Angels sinned. All right?

So, God did not spare angels when they sinned, but instead cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment.

[17:53] Would you notice that verse? Hold on to that verse. Because my suggestion to you is what is happening in Revelation 9 is the fulfillment of that verse. All right?

So, what Peter is saying is that God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell. The word that Peter uses is the Greek word tartarus, abyss, bottomless pit.

To be kept until the judgment, Peter says. So, do you see what Peter is saying? He's saying there's a group of angels, who I'm suggesting would be known as holy ones or watchers, who sinned against God and God had them bound in the abyss.

We've just read that in Revelation 9. Jude, who also uses lots and lots of imagery from Second Temple literature, from First Enoch, from intertestimonial period, he says this, The angels, and this is why Jude is a little bit weird to understand, because you read it, and in 21 verses later or 24 verses later, you're like, where did he get all that stuff from?

Right? So, Jude 6 says this, And the angels, as if, like, matter of fact, like it's common knowledge, and it is common knowledge if you're reading this with a Jewish head on and you understand Second Temple literature, he says, And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority but left their proper dwelling, and you're like, what are you talking about?

[19:26] Well, again, if you know your Bible, you know that that's a cross-reference to Genesis chapter 6. And Genesis chapter 6, we're told that the sons of God, let's call them the holy ones, let's just call them the watchers, came into the daughters of men, and they bore children to them.

So these angels didn't stay within their own position of authority, Jude says, they left their proper dwelling, Jude says, and came to earth, Genesis records, to reproduce with women.

Genesis chapter 6 goes on to call the offspring of that unholy union, Nephilim. Now, you've heard Nephilim. If you've been doing your daily readings, and you started at Genesis, January chapter 1, you've already passed Genesis 6, and you passed pretty quickly, because you're like, I don't even know what that's about.

And that's scary, right? So these are the Nephilim. Now, go back to 2 Peter chapter, whatever we are, 2, verse 4. Peter says that those watchers or holy ones, God has kept in eternal chains, under gloomy darkness, until the judgment of the great day, or the fifth trumpet.

So that's a long way around to say this. The abyss, verse 2, chapter 9, is the place where the fallen angels, or the holy ones, or the watchers from Daniel 4, are imprisoned.

[21:00] And what I think we're going to see is that the spirits of their offspring, the Nephilim, are there too.

And they are described in this chapter as locusts. And so to this angel, possibly Uriel of Tartarus, has been given a key to this place.

That should frighten us. If any of that, that we've just read, is partially true, that should have us question a lot of what is happening in the world today.

So then we read in verse 2, that from the shaft rose smoke, like the smoke of a great furnace.

And the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth. And they were given power, like the power of scorpions of the earth.

[ 22 : 04 ] And they were told not to harm the grass of the earth. So evidently, some time has passed between the previous judgments where all the grass was destroyed.

They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads, which are probably the seal Jews from chapter 7.

They, that is the locusts, verse 5, were allowed to torment them, that is the seal Jews, for five months, but not to kill them. And their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone.

I don't know what that's like, by the way, but I imagine it's pretty painful. And in those days, people will seek death and not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them.

In appearance, the locusts were like horses prepared for battle. They weren't horses, but they were like horses. So in appearance, the locusts were like horses prepared for battle.

[ 23 : 15 ] And this is what that looks like. A horse prepared for battle looks like this. On their heads were what looked like crowns of gold. Their faces were like human faces.

Their hair like woman's hair and their teeth like lion's teeth. Like, can we agree? There ain't like no locusts we've ever seen. They had breastplates, breastplates like breastplates of iron and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle.

They have tails and stings like scorpions and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails. And they have a king over them.

The angel of the bottomless pit, his name is Hebrew, is Abaddon and in Greek, his name is Apollyon. And so look, who or what are these locusts and who is Abaddon?

Now, of course, there isn't a simple answer to that and you wouldn't expect a simple answer to that. And, you know, one of the conclusions that we drew on Wednesday at Life Group as we dipped into this chapter was actually, you know, these aren't normal, ordinary locusts.

[ 24 : 37 ] I think we could probably agree, can't we? So my best suggestion again to you is that these locusts are representative. It's just what John saw and what he sees he tries to describe in language that he is familiar with.

Like, because you can't describe something you've never really seen before and no one's ever seen before. So you have to use all of these synonyms to help you describe. And so that's what he's doing.

My best suggestion to you is that these locusts are spirits of the Nephilim from Genesis 6. If you read Joel chapter 1 and 2, you'll see another description of a plague of locusts devastating Israel's land.

And the description is modeled on the plague of locusts that we read about in Exodus chapter 10. But get this, the locust judgment in Joel 2 is introduced, and I would probably argue Joel 2 and Revelation 9 are talking about the same thing.

The locust judgment in Joel 2 is introduced and concluded with the phrase blow a trumpet. Does that ring a bell? Now, in Jewish rabbinic tradition, the Abaddon were angels of destruction who had authority over thousands of scorpions.

[ 25 : 55 ] In verse 10, we're told that they have tails and they sting like scorpions. Again, they're not scorpions, but they sting like scorpions. And also, can I just say that these are not Apache helicopters.

They are not Chinese intercontinental ballistic missiles, which is one theory I read this week. Like, we need to do better than that, don't we? All of these creatures were given authority to torment, verse 10 says, for five months.

That's it. Five months. No shorter, no longer. I don't know whether these people are going to know that it's for five months, but listen, God will not allow this to continue any longer than he says so.

Like, this is a natural disaster. God is saying, here's the first day, here's the last day. And you can't act outside of those days.

You don't have authority to do anything unless I've said that you have the authority to do so. And so, in many ways, we read this as the kindness and goodness of God.

[ 27 : 06 ] Don't we? You know, God, in his goodness and in his kindness, hasn't rocked up on the first day of the tribulation and said, I'm just going to throw everything at you for the next seven years. Right?

He said, you're five months. Five months to come to your senses. Five months to repent. Five months to see my mercy. Five months to turn to me. The Bible says that the goodness and kindness of God leads us where?

To repentance. To turn to him. And so, God gives this timeline. Five months. And God also withdraws the ability to die.

He withdraws the ability to die. He says that people will want to die and they won't be able to die because God won't allow them to die. So, he withdraws the ability to die.

You can't get out of it by dying. Listen, that's God's mercy. Because there's something worse than physical death, isn't there? So, he is keeping people alive. He is allowing the torment to go on for only five months.

[ 28 : 18 ] And clearly, if you skip down to verse 20 of chapter 9, the salvation, the goal is salvation. verse 20, the rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up the worshipping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood which cannot see or hear or walk and they did not repent of their murder.

So, the idea is that God is saying this is the time to repent and there will be some people who do not and, Lord willing, there will be some people that do.

And so, the goal is salvation. That was the purpose. Now, verse 12 says that the first woe has passed. You remember there's three woes? We see two woes in this chapter.

One woe in chapter 12, I think. And so, the first woe has passed. Behold, two woes are still to come. And the sixth angel blew, verse 13, his trumpet and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.

So, the four angels who would be prepared for this hour, day, month, and year were released to kill a third of mankind. Now, we go from cheeriness to cheeriness.

[ 29 : 40 ] The river Euphrates is associated in the Bible with the boundaries of the Garden of Eden. Right? So, in Genesis chapter 2, we read this whole kind of thing where, when you read it in Genesis chapter 2, you're like, so what?

So, a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden and for me, that would be enough. Do you know? I'm just like, great, there's a river that flows out from Eden to water the garden. And then, you know, Moses records that it divided, it became four rivers.

Okay, I can handle that. And then he goes, the first was named Pison and it flowed around the whole land and, you know, where there's gold and it keeps going. And then he gets to this last one, verse 14, the name of the third river is the Tigris which flows out of Assyria and the fourth river is the Euphrates.

And then what does God do when he expels Adam and Eve from the garden? Genesis chapter 3, verse 24, he placed the cherubim. Who were the cherubim? Class of angel, plural.

And a flaming sword that turned every way to God, the way to the tree of life. And so look, as I understand these four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates, I understand those angels to be the same angels that we read about in Genesis chapter 3.

[ 31 : 04 ] And where their role in Genesis chapter 3 is to guard the way to the tree of life, here in Revelation 9 they are taking life. And then quite abruptly in verse 16 of Revelation 9, out of nowhere, it seems, no explanation, nothing.

we read about armies used to kill a large portion of humanity. They just pop on the scene as if we should know that they were there.

The number of mounted troops was twice, 10,000, times 10,000. You're like, where on earth did they come from? Like we were talking about four angels just a moment ago and now we're talking about tens and tens and tens of thousands of troops.

I heard their number and there's no indication who or what these mounted troops are. And when I say there's no indication, there is no indication in any literature whatsoever about, that gives a good enough reason about who these are.

Now that should probably surprise us given the fact that John is building on lots and lots of things that have come before, lots and layers that have come before.

[ 32 : 18 ] Here we just get introduced to these troops, these mounted troops seemingly out of nowhere. They are certainly, we should probably say, they are certainly related to in some way the four angels in verse 15.

Some way. We should also note that they are probably or clearly supernatural in origin. So, one book I read a while back was saying that these troops were North Korean and they represented North Korean armies invading Israel.

Got to do better than that. So, like, they are related to the four angels in verse 15 that we know. They are clearly supernatural that we know. After that, we don't really know.

I think it's okay to be honest about that. This is how I saw the angels in my vision, John says, who rode them. They were, this is about the troops on the horses.

They wore breastplates the color of fire and a sapphire and sulfur and the heads of the horses were like lion's heads. So, again, hard to determine that these are actual horses.

[ 33 : 44 ] and fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths. By these three plagues, a third of mankind was killed by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths.

For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails and their tails are like serpents with heads and by means of them they wound. Verse 20 says that the rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues, this is relating to the three plagues, did not repent of their works of their hands nor give up worshipping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood which cannot see or hear or walk nor did they repent of their murders or sorceries or sexual immorality or their thefts.

Now, look, you might kind of look at a chapter like this and you go, what on earth? How did, like, apart from building a bunker underground and getting a whole bunch of canned meat and just sticking it out for a while, what else do we take?

What can we take from this chapter? Especially if you read this as something is still being yet future that hasn't happened, we can kind of draw to conclusions like, well, that's terrible for them but I'm going to make sure I'm not around then, right?

But I kind of alluded to this at the beginning about how this chapter kind of opens up a whole different kind of perspective on what is happening in the world and what happens in our own lives.

[ 35 : 17 ] If you've ever read Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan, you'll remember that the main character is a guy called Christian which is helpful so we can remember his name and shortly after leaving the palace beautiful which is a beautiful palace he travels down into the valley of humiliation which is a humiliating experience.

Now we've all been there, right? So we've all had valleys. John Bunyan says that Christian he left the palace beautiful and he was left and he was equipped and he was armed to go on his journey and he finds himself in the valley of humiliation.

Now what happens in the valley of humiliation is he meets a monster. Now look, this is not overly theological, alright? So, you know, this is not Bible, alright? This is John Bunyan, okay?

So he meets this monster and this monster, his name is Apollyon. Ring a bell? Apollyon launches a vicious attack armed with accusation, shame and despair.

Look, as much as I don't think there's a huge amount of great theology going on there, I think it is helpful for us and one of the things I wanted to think about briefly with you today was how today we are and can be engaged in this same kind of spiritual warfare that a Christian was engaged in.

[ 36 : 55 ] Like if even a portion of Revelation 9 is true and that there are categories of angels, angelic beings, both good, fool and bad and there are some waiting to be unleashed and there's a whole thing going on in an unseen!

realm that we cannot see, does that not explain a whole bunch of stuff that is potentially going on? And I don't think that we need to open the newspapers like anyone does it anymore, scroll to the newspaper and kind of start thinking well, you know, Napoleon is Putin and, you know, I don't think we have to do it.

I don't think we have to go farther than our own minds to see that spiritual warfare is a very real thing. And so that's what I kind of wanted to spend the rest of our time together thinking about and I know this could turn into like a mini-series on spiritual warfare which I have no intention of doing.

I thought that maybe one thing that I think I've just noticed and I think is probably the most important or the most critical thing for us to start practicing and start walking in and that is the area of lies and honesty.

Now, before you kind of get your back up and kind of Simon, I don't lie, of course you don't and I'm not suggesting that you do and I'm not suggesting that you're anything other than honest.

[ 38 : 35 ] but it's important for us to be aware that the physical realm is only one small area of God's creation and there is a war raging for the souls of mankind in a place that is unseen and that

unseen realm as we've seen in our text, that unseen realm often breaks into the seen realm.

There are some things that maybe you've experienced, certainly I've experienced, that you can't put down to coincidence, logic or the natural work in the way of the world.

There are some things that you just look at and you just go, that's got to be a God thing or a Satan thing. Right? So there are some times when the unseen realm breaks into or collides with that which is seen.

And I think probably, I don't know whether this is true of other decades or centuries or time, but certainly one of the battlegrounds of our own time has got to be our minds.

It's a battleground. We are more prone to listen and believe lies than we are to listen and believe the truth.

[ 39 : 56 ] Is that true? Some of you are like, I'm not too sure. Well, you've just proved me right. We are more prone to listen and believe lies than we are to listen and believe the truth.

You remember the first words of Satan recorded in the Bible in Genesis chapter 3, we find him twisting the truth. The second words of Satan, we find him denying the truth.

Jesus didn't mix his words when he accused the Pharisees in John chapter 8 of lying. He said, you are of your father the devil and your will is to do your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him.

When he lies, he speaks out of his own character for he is a liar and the father of lies. Like, just suck it to them, Jesus, right? So, Jesus is saying that Satan is a liar.

It shouldn't surprise us as we look at history, we look at the Bible, that one of the strategies of Satan is to get us to believe things that shouldn't be believed. Now, look, I'm not talking about theology, I'm not talking about heresy, I'm not talking about discernment, I'm talking about things that are true that we struggle to believe.

[ 41 : 19 ] I think most of the time, if we're honest, the things that we believe are the things that we struggle to believe are the things that are about God about us and about each other.

The things that we struggle to believe are the truths about God, so Satan, did God really say, the truth about us, you will become like God, and the truth about each other.

They're the things that we struggle to believe, and lies in the area of relationships, we are all aware that lies in the area of relationships destroy relationships, don't they?

Right? You know too often how easy it is, and I don't use this word lightly, but how easy it is to demonize people, particularly those we disagree with.

But one of the things that this text instructs us to remember is that there is a supernatural realm, and God is revealing that world to us, that will one day collide in full force with everything that is seen.

[ 42 : 33 ] And the choice for us today is to walk in light rather than darkness. I think sometimes we choose to walk in darkness.

And what I mean by that is that there is an unseen realm and a master of it who is out to destroy you. And I want to remind you today that whatever you're walking through is not in the language of Ephesians 6 a battle against flesh and blood.

It's not against flesh and blood. It's a battle against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms led by Satan. That's what Paul says.

And I think one of the biggest challenges for us is that we understand that the unseen realm again often breaks into the seen realm. And one of the places that it breaks into the seen realm is in our minds as it affects our relationships.

Like if you start believing something about yourself or about other people it changes the way you interact with them.

[ 43 : 49 ] Doesn't it? if you've ever been betrayed by someone trusting others becomes an issue. It just does.

You become more distant. Why? It's natural. You don't want to be betrayed again. Like if you've gone through a messy divorce it's harder for you to walk in healthy relationships.

If you've been abandoned by your parents that's hard for you to trust people. They even have fancy names for all that stuff now. But listen all of that not all of it most of it is based on an assumption.

And the assumption is actually a lie. The lie is that everyone is the same and even they will eventually betray you and even God will eventually betray you.

And so forging any kind of relationship is difficult. But Paul said this to the Ephesian church.

[ 44 : 59 ] He said this in Ephesians chapter 4. He said put away falsehood. Now look at the context. We'll look at the context in a minute. The context is in relationship. The context isn't in theology.

The context isn't in heresy. The context isn't in how you read your Bible. The context is in relationship. He says put away falsehood. And then he starts to say how that would work out in relationship.

How you might put away falsehood and what might be the impact of that. He said let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor for why we are members of one another.

He says it's even okay to be angry. Be angry but don't sin. Don't let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity.

No don't give an opportunity for the devil. Who's he writing to? He's writing to the Christian church. Don't give an opportunity for the devil. Satan's messages will whisper in our ear and get us to question God's goodness and generosity on the basis of what?

[ 46 : 03 ] On the basis of our imperfection. I'm not good enough. Or on the basis of someone else's imperfection. They're not good enough. And when it comes to relationships this usually goes one of two ways.

God isn't blessing me because of my imperfections or God isn't blessing me because of their imperfections. Either I'm the problem or they're the problem. And then we turn it on his head and go well God isn't perhaps the good God that I thought he was.

Either way we have believed that God blesses us on the basis of works mine or theirs. And so what do we do? We start drawing up battle lines because now someone is responsible for whatever has happened in my life.

You might be a fighter. You might be a flighter. A fighter says it's someone else's problem. A flighter says it's my problem. So we start drawing these battle lines because now someone is responsible for whatever is happening in my life.

and then we come to this realization that I can actually be used by Satan's messengers to be the bringer of a lie.

[ 47 : 18 ] You ever thought about that? That you and I can be used to bring a lie to someone else. And that I can choose darkness rather than light.

that I can choose to, I think I alluded this last week, maybe the week before, we can choose to grumble about what God is doing in my life.

Or grumble about a brother or a sister. Or grumble about how things are working out. Or I can do any number of one things to bring a lie to that situation.

I'll just say this because time's probably gone. Time's gone. I think the answer to this problem and this answer to not cooperating, not giving an opportunity for the devil, lays largely in how Paul answers it.

We won't go into it, but I think it's self explanatory. In Ephesians chapter 1, Paul reminds us of who we are. Then he argues for who we are, and then he tells us the outcomes about who we are.

[ 48 : 44 ] So he says, this is who you are. Then he argues the point to try and prove it. And then he says, since that is true, here are the blessings of who you are.

And I'll just say this, if you're prone to believe lies about yourself or others, a good habit to get into, and I would have put this on the screen, and maybe we can type it as we go, is to firstly define your identity.

And what I mean by that, what does God say about you? Who are you? Define your identity. What does the Bible say about you? And then after that, to argue for that identity.

Now, I don't know whether you do this. I do this all the time. Maybe it's just, I don't know how my brain works, but I argue with myself all the time. Are you sure? Yes, I'm sure.

What are you talking about? When you heard me the first time, and I'm driving to work, and maybe I'm having this little conversation in my mind, I'm arguing. Can I encourage you to argue for your identity, what the Bible says about you, and then to articulate the outcomes of having that identity.

[ 49 : 56 ] Look, you could do this in a journal, you could just do this in a conversation that you're having in your mind, you could do this in a conversation with someone else. Now, here's the real powerful thing. Once you've defined your identity, who you are in Christ, and you've argued for that identity, and then you've articulated the outcomes of having that identity, would you do that with someone who you, I'm going to put this out there, this is not anyone else probably apart from me,

because you don't do this, do this about someone you've fallen out with.

Define their identity, and this is hard sometimes, argue for their identity, and then articulate the outcomes of them having that identity and relationship with you.

And all of a sudden, it may be not all of a sudden, maybe over time, you come to realize that if they are a brother and sister in Christ, that's who they are, that's to find their identity, and here's all my Bible verses to prove that, I'm overcoming that lie that I've believed.

Does that make sense? Define your identity, argue for that identity, articulate the outcomes of having that identity. You see this in Paul's letter to the Church of Philippi, he wrote there in Philippians chapter 2, he said, do all things without grumbling or disputing.

How many things should we do without grumbling or disputing? It's going to be tough in it tomorrow morning when the alarm clock goes off. Do all things without grumbling or disputing.

[ 51 : 48 ] These are the outcomes of believing a lie. Grumbling and disputing are outcomes of believing a lie. That you and I have a different identity than the one the Bible says that we have.

So don't grumble or argue. Why? Verse 15, that you may be blameless and innocent, different outcome, children of God or truly defining the identity God has given you in Jesus.

In other words, rightly believing the truth about you. Who are you? You're a child of God. A child of God doesn't argue or dispute without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation amongst whom you shine as lights in the world, not walking in darkness.

James 4, verse 7 says, submit yourselves therefore to God. What does that mean? I think it just simply means believe what he says about you and others is true.

Submit yourself therefore to God. When you do, resist the devil and he will flee. The devil who's speaking lies about who you are and what others are, he will flee.

[ 53 : 06 ] Now, how do you do that really quickly? One of the things that we need to understand is this, that all of the promises that close this book, that close the Bible, that close Revelation, all of the positive promises are only for those who overcome.

Have you noticed that? There are no promises for the defeated. Paul says in Romans chapter 12, verse 21, do not overcome evil, or do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

So you only have two options, we either overcome or are overcome, there's not a third ground.

What does that mean? We have to start walking in this. We can either walk away agreeing or disagreeing, but to put this into practice, we actually have to walk in it.

There are no positive promises for those who allow themselves to be overcome. Here's how they did that according to Revelation 12, verse 11.

And they have conquered him by the blood of the lamb, and listen, by the word of their testimony.

What does that mean? Well, I think in our context, it means to embrace the truth, and to embrace the truth by embracing the triumph of Christ, the word of their testimony.

[ 54 : 34 ] It's about embracing the truth rather than listening to a lie. And that's hard for all of us because I think we're more prone to listen and receive a lie than we are to listen and receive the truth, particularly in relationships.

And the way to be an overcomer, and the way to walk in the promises that God has for us, is that we embrace the truth about Jesus being our overcomer and making the way for us.

And in Revelation 12, they spoke that truth in faith. And so can I encourage you this morning, just as a closing point, and I've said that like four times already, that there is a spiritual world, there is a spiritual realm.

And each and every day, each and every moment of the day, that unseen realm is colliding with the seen realm. And the first battleground that took place in Genesis chapter 3 was the battle of the mind.

And I don't think much has changed. And so can I encourage you this morning that there are lies that are easy to believe.

[ 55 : 57 ] And it's easier to believe a lie than it is a truth. And so let's start speaking the truth by faith. Let's start identifying each other's identity in the Lord.

let's argue for that identity. And let's walk in the blessings of the outcomes of that identity together. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you. We're thankful, Lord, that we have your Holy Spirit. Lord, we can't understand any of this without him.

Lord, and I want to say, Lord, if there's anything that is not of you this morning that's been said, Lord, would you just let it kind of just disappear from our memory, Lord, and just the things that you would have us remember, let us remember.

Lord, but we don't want to just remember stuff, we want to walk in it. Lord, and there's truths here, Lord, that are hard to understand.

[ 57 : 03 ] There's things here that just may be simply conjecture on my part. Lord, but we want to take, Lord, the thing that you have for us today and know that there is an enemy out to get us, but Jesus has overcome and Jesus has had the victory.

Lord, we want to thank you for that. Lord, we thank you, Lord, that we can speak that truth. And because we can speak that truth, we can speak the truth about each other and about ourselves. Lord, if you hadn't had the victory, Lord, we'd all be lost and doomed and there would be no reason to speak the truth about ourselves or each other. Indeed, there would be no truth to speak. And so, Lord, we're thankful this morning, Lord, that we can turn to each other, just in this room, Lord, and we can recognize each other as being a child of God.

And, Lord, would you help us, not only in our own minds, to argue for that truth, that they are a child of God, saved by Jesus, who has had the victory before us.

But then we would encourage each other, we would argue for that. And by doing so, Lord, we would be able to walk in the victory, in the blessings of being an overcomer.

[ 58 : 29 ] Lord, help us this week, Lord, to not cooperate or give an opportunity for the devil. Lord, would we speak encouragement, exhortation, affirmation, praise to one another.

Lord, would we be the one who stands in the breach for each other. Lord, we thank you so much for what you're doing amongst us. And, Lord, we're all aware how sometimes honesty can lead to vulnerability and vulnerability can lead to disappointment.

Lord, protect us from that, we pray. Would you continue to build us up, strengthen us, encourage us, exhort us. Lord, as we sing, give us again the joy of our salvation.

Lord, would we recognize, Lord, that you are still working and walking amongst us. Lord, we pray, Lord, for specifically those people who may be experiencing the collision of the unseen realm and the seen realm in a very unique way.

Lord, and we ask for your protection on them. Lord, we thank you that they are promised that protection. Lord, that the one greater in them is greater than the one that is not in them.

[ 60 : 01 ] Lord, so we thank you, Lord, for that promise. And Lord, we ask that you would encourage them, strengthen them. Would you strengthen Sheena, Lord, as she prepares to go onto the mission field where we know that the devil is hard at work, winning in many places.

Strengthen her as she goes. Strengthen our minds. Protect our families. Lord, protect the people that we love. Protect us, Lord, from being conduits of darkness rather than light.

So, Lord, help us, we pray. We thank you, Lord, that we can come to you and ask you to help us. Thank you that we have a God like you. Lord, we praise you and we worship you in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.