



THE COSMIC BATTLE

WEEK 1
03.06.16

FOCUS VERSE

Matthew 25:34

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

LESSON TEXT

Genesis 3:15

15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Romans 8:35–37

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

II Corinthians 2:14

14 Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

I John 4:4

4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

Revelation 12:9

9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Revelation 20:10

10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.



FOCUS THOUGHT

Bible history records spiritual warfare between God and the devil before human existence on earth. This war continues until the end, the ultimate defeat of the devil, and the ultimate victory for the church.



CULTURE CONNECTION

We Win!

The late Roger Bennett penned a song years ago titled, “I’ve Read the Back of the Book and We Win.” As the song intimates, if one will read the Bible through to the end of the Book of Revelation, he will discover the Lord and His church are the ultimate victors in the great cosmic battle of the ages. Whatever seeming defeats and disappointments we may sometimes suffer in life, we can be confident of ultimate victory through Jesus Christ!

Many students of Scripture have expressed various views about Jesus’ words as recorded in Luke 10:18: “And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” The majority consensus of commentators

seems to recognize that the intention of this verse had to do with the ultimate, prophetic conclusion to the great battle between good and evil rather than to only one specific event. In other words, we win!

The Pulpit Commentary shares the following thoughts regarding this verse of Scripture: “The Lord’s words here were prophetic rather than descriptive of what had taken, or was then taking place. . . . Jesus Christ saw. . . . the final defeat which at length his servants . . . should win over the restless enemy of the souls of men.”

Be encouraged weary soldier of the Cross; we shall win through Jesus Christ!

OUTLINE

- I. THE WAR BEGINS
- II. THE REASON FOR WAR
- III. THE DEVIL’S PREDESTINED DEFEAT
- IV. THE CHURCH’S PREDESTINED VICTORY

CONTEMPLATING THE TOPIC

As it relates to the realm of the spirit, the warfare theme is found frequently in Scripture. For instance, at the conclusion of Daniel’s twenty-one days of mourning, an angel visited him to reveal what would happen to Daniel’s people in the latter days. The angel had been delayed in coming to Daniel for these twenty-one days because the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood him (Daniel 10:13). The angel also anticipated that when he left Daniel, he would again have to fight against the prince of Persia and also with the prince of Greece (Daniel 10:20). The only help this angel received was from Michael, a chief prince who was also Daniel’s prince,

probably indicating Michael was Israel’s prince, just as there were princes of Persia and Greece. (See Daniel 12:1.)

Isaiah described the Lord as putting on a breastplate of righteousness and a helmet of salvation (Isaiah 59:17). This is military terminology, suggesting preparation for battle. Paul used this language in his discussion of “the whole armour of God” (Ephesians 6:10–17). He used similar language in I Thessalonians 5:8, but in that verse the breastplate referred to faith and love rather than to righteousness. This indicates the discussion of spiritual warfare centers not on which piece of armor is connected with each spiritual virtue, but with the virtues themselves. In other words, we need not concern ourselves with the precise description of the first-century breastplate in an effort to understand why the breastplate is included in the armor; we need to reflect on the importance of righteousness, faith, and love in our spiritual battles.

Paul also pointed out “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds” (II Corinthians 10:4). These strongholds are arguments that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God. (See II Corinthians 10:5.)

The warfare theme concludes near the end of the Book of Revelation. Christ, who judges and makes war in righteousness, will return to strike the nations and “rule them with a rod of iron” (Revelation 19:11–15). The beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies will gather together to make war against the returning Christ (Revelation 19:19). Satan’s final act of rebellion against God will occur when, following his release from the bottomless pit after one thousand years of incarceration, he will gather God’s enemies together and surround the city of Jerusalem. Fire from Heaven will destroy the enemies of God, and the devil will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. (See Revelation 20:1–10.)

From the moment of his initial rebellion, Satan has been fighting a losing battle. We have read the back of the book. Jesus Christ is the victor!

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

I. THE WAR BEGINS

“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:16).

“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” (Genesis 3:1).

The warning not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil implied, without explaining, some kind of tension in the created realm that preexisted the creation of human beings. So does God’s command for Adam to “keep” the garden (Genesis 2:15). The word translated “keep” (*shamar*) includes the idea of “to guard.” The nature of this tension gained clarity with the appearance of the serpent, who challenged the truthfulness of God’s command. (See Genesis 3:1–5.)

Although Scripture does not give the precise time of Satan’s initial rebellion against

God, it does reveal Satan was cast to the earth along with his angels.

“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation 12:9).

Apparently Satan, whose name means “adversary,” was followed in his rebellion by some angels, perhaps numbering a third of the angelic host. (See Revelation 12:4.) A careful reading of Isaiah 14:12–15 and Ezekiel 28:11–19 offers insight into the nature of Satan’s rebellion. Couched in symbolic references to human kings, these texts seem to move beyond the human realm to describe cosmic warfare.

From the moment of his initial rebellion, Satan has been fighting a losing battle.

II. THE REASON FOR WAR

The cause of the cosmic battle is indicated by the description of Lucifer’s fall:

“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Isaiah 14:12–14).

In sum, the enmity between God and Lucifer was introduced by Lucifer’s desire to displace God. God did not create Lucifer as His enemy; he was perfect from the day of his

creation until iniquity was found in him. (See Ezekiel 28:15.)

The idea of angels rebelling against God and then being identified with geographic locations may at first seem strange. This includes not only Daniel's references to the princes of Persia and Greece, but also Ezekiel's "king of Tyrus" (Ezekiel 28:12) and Isaiah's "king of Babylon" (Isaiah 14:4). But some insight is gained in the letter to the Hebrews: "For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak" (Hebrews 2:5).

In its prolific use of the Hebrew Scriptures, Hebrews follows almost exclusively the readings of the *Septuagint*, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Hebrews 2:5 is apparently an allusion to the *Septuagint* reading of Deuteronomy 32:8: "When the Most High divided the nations, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the angels of God." This is also the reading of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Daniel 10:13, 21 and 12:1, in connection with Deuteronomy 32:8, suggest the archangel Michael is "one of the chief princes" and the prince of Israel. It seems God has given other angels some kind of administrative responsibility over various nations of the world.

The idea of angelic administration over the nations of the world is suggested in Colossians 1:16: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him."

This verse indicates there are both visible (human) and invisible (angelic) realms of government. The many facets of God's wisdom are "made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 3:10, NKJV), an apparent reference to these angelic authorities.

Some of these angels must have joined Lucifer in his rebellion against God's authority (Isaiah 14:12-16; Ezekiel 28:11-17; Revelation 12:4, 7-9), for they are described as the enemies of God and of His people.

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor

powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38).

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

"And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Colossians 2:15).

Even though God, for His own sovereign purposes, has to this point allowed these fallen angelic rulers to retain an influence over specific nations, those angels faithful to God are able to gain victory over them when on a mission for God, as seen in the angel's explanation to Daniel of the reason for his delay. It may be that the kingdoms shaken by Lucifer in his fall are those nations ruled by the angels who joined him in his rebellion (Isaiah 14:16). Therefore, the "kings" before whom this fallen angel was laid in disgrace may be the other angelic rulers (Ezekiel 28:17). The angels God sent to "gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:31) may be those angelic rulers who remained faithful to Him. Among the nations of the world for which they are responsible, they will search for those who believe in the Messiah Jesus.

The superiority and ultimate victory of Jesus over the angels is seen in that the "world to come" (Hebrews 2:5) will be under subjection to Him, not to angels.

"God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:1-3).

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven,

saying, *The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever*" (Revelation 11:15).

III. THE DEVIL'S PREDESTINED DEFEAT

Jesus declared that everything written concerning Him in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled. (See Luke 24:44.) Of these three sections of the Hebrew Scriptures, it is significant that the Book of Psalms is the one most frequently quoted, paraphrased, or alluded to in the New Testament. From the Psalter, Psalm 110:1 is the verse most frequently referenced in the New Testament. This verse guarantees the certainty of the defeat of all the Messiah's enemies, including Satan.

"The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Psalm 110:1).

The resurrected Messiah will sit in exaltation and supremacy until His enemies have been subdued. The idea of His enemies being made His footstool "is an ancient Near Eastern metaphor for absolute control" (Willem A. VanGemeren, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*). (See Joshua 10:24; I Kings 5:3.)

The Hebrew word translated "till" (*'ad*) does not suggest that once the Messiah's enemies have been subdued He will no longer occupy the place of exaltation. The word includes within its range of meaning "duration," "eternity," "perpetuity," "during," and "while." The idea is that the Messiah will occupy this place while His enemies are being subdued. He will continue to occupy it after they are subdued. His throne is forever.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice

from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32-33).

The rod of the Messiah's strength that extends from Zion, and His authority to rule His enemies (Psalm 110:2) link Psalm 110 with Psalm 2.

"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psalm 2:8-9).

This text is echoed in the account of the Second Coming (Revelation 19:15), which is followed by Satan's one-thousand-year imprisonment that ultimately concludes with the devil's final defeat by being cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10).

IV. THE CHURCH'S PREDESTINED VICTORY

An inspired interpretation of Daniel's vision of the Ancient of Days offers assurance of the victory of God's people over all opposition: "But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever" (Daniel 7:18).

In the vision recorded in Daniel 7:3-14, Daniel saw four beasts, the fourth of whom had ten horns, three of which were uprooted and replaced by an eleventh horn. As the vision continued, Daniel saw the Ancient of Days take His seat on His throne. The next and final entity revealed was one like a son of man, who came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him.

Because the vision alarmed Daniel, he inquired of one standing by as to its meaning, and the interpretation was made known to him (Daniel 7:15-16).

The four beasts represented four kings (verse 17). The fourth beast was unique in

that the kingdom over which the beast ruled gave rise to ten additional kings; then an eleventh subdued three of the previous kings (verses 23–24). This king spoke boastfully against the Most High and “wore out” His saints (verse 25). Finally, this boastful king was stripped of his dominion (verse 26).

But who is the “one like a son of man”? The best translation of the Hebrew text in this case is “one like a son of man” not “one like the Son of man” (Daniel 7:13) as it is in the KJV. Prior to Daniel’s request to know the meaning of the vision, he saw that “dominion, and glory, and a kingdom” were given to the “one like a son of man” (Daniel 7:13–14, ESV). This kingdom was everlasting, never to be destroyed, and it was characterized by the human population of the entire earth serving the one like a son of man.

When Daniel asked to know the meaning of the vision, he was told “the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever” (Daniel 7:18). The saints would take possession of the kingdom after the eleventh horn was judged (verses 21–26). Following the judgment of this horn, “the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him” (verse 27).

Concerning the identity of the four beasts, the interpretation said, “These great beasts . . . are four kings” (Daniel 7:17). But the interpretation never specifically identifies the one like a son of man. Instead, it attributes to the “saints of the most High” (verse 18) the same privilege enjoyed by the one like a son of man—the possession of the everlasting kingdom (verses 14, 18, 22, 27).

There is substantial evidence in this text that the one like a son of man represents the saints of God. First, when Daniel asked for the interpretation of the vision, he was told that the kingdom the vision portrayed as being given to the one like a son of man was given to “the saints of the most High” (Daniel 18, 22, 27). This suggests that the one like a son of man represents a corporate human identity in much the same way that the fourth beast represents a fourth kingdom on earth (verse 23).

Second, “authority to execute judgment” was given to “the Son of man” (John 5:27). But in the vision, it was not the one like a son of man who administered judgment; it was the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:9–10, 22).

Third, the description of the Ancient of Days seems to match the description of Jesus in Revelation 1:12–16. As for the Ancient of Days, “the hair of his head” was “like the pure wool” (Daniel 7:9). As for Jesus, “His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow” (Revelation 1:14).

Reduced to its essence, Daniel’s vision indicates that although four successive ruling political powers will arise that will oppress God’s people (Daniel 7:1–8, 15–17, 19–21, 23–25), they will be stripped of their power by the Ancient of Days [Jesus Christ] (verses 9–12, 22, 26), who will allow the faithful to share in His dominion (verses 13–14, 18, 22, 27). Thus interpreted, Daniel’s vision harmonizes with John’s millennial vision. (See Revelation 19:11–21; 20:4–6.)

The eternal possession of the kingdom by the saints of the Most High assures us of Satan’s permanent defeat and the ultimate victory of people of faith: “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34).

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

Stress is one of the primary causes of spiritual, social, and health disorder in today’s society. We may think this is due only to current cultural decay, but Jesus addressed this problem in the first century AD: “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matthew 6:34, NKJV).

Behind the problem of stress is the problem of sin, which originated with Lucifer’s rebellion against God and was introduced to the human race in the Garden of Eden. God never intended for people to need to engage in spiritual warfare. This is a consequence of both Satanic and human rebellion against God.

“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and

her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15).

The reason for the Incarnation is that “through death he [Jesus] might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14–15).

We know the outcome; we should live in the assurance of the victory that is already determined.

As we anticipate Satan’s final defeat, we can enjoy in advance the victory Christ won on His cross. We can do this by faith, trusting in God regardless of life’s circumstances. Paul outlined a major step toward the enjoyment of this victory:

“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing

by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you” (Philippians 4:4–9).

Here are the key points in Paul’s admonition: (1) Rejoice. Do not descend into morose gloom. (2) Embrace moderation. Extremism in any direction is unhealthy. (3) Eagerly anticipate the Second Coming. This will help you keep Heaven’s values in view. (4) Pray. Do not worry. (5) Think on right things like truth, honesty, justice, purity, loveliness, good news, virtue, and those things that are praiseworthy.

If we follow Paul’s counsel, we will enjoy the peace of God even in the face of the cosmic battle. We know the outcome; we should live in the assurance of the victory that is already determined. ■

REFLECTIONS

- What is the significance of the variations among the virtues associated with specific pieces of the armor of God?
- What indications are seen in Scripture that Lucifer’s fall predated the creation of human beings?
- What biblical evidence suggests geographical territories are influenced in some way by angels, whether faithful or fallen?
- How does Psalm 110:1 point to Satan’s ultimate defeat?
- Discuss the identity of the one like a son of man in Daniel 7.